

Quad

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2011 with funding from
Lyrasis Members and Sloan Foundation

<http://www.archive.org/details/quadliteraturear1995unse>

Quad

The Literary & Art Journal of Birmingham-Southern College

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF	Finley Bullard
LAYOUT EDITOR	Steve Davidson
POETRY EDITOR	Carolyn Hembree
FICTION EDITOR	Heath LaGrone
ART EDITOR	Leslie Nuby
FACULTY ADVISOR	Dr. Sandra Sprayberry

EDITORIAL POLICY

Quad, the literary magazine of Birmingham-Southern College, was founded in 1940 and is published annually. The editors encourage undergraduate submissions, which are reviewed anonymously by Quad staff members. Quad is funded by the Student Government Association.

Primarily an undergraduate publication, Quad also accepts art, literature, and music submissions from students in the Adult Studies program, faculty members, graduates, and affiliates of Birmingham-Southern College in the fall. Submission policies for the magazine are subject to change from year to year. Inquiries about current submission policies may be sent to Quad, Box 741, Birmingham-Southern College, Birmingham, AL 35254.

The views expressed in Quad are those of the artists and authors and are not necessarily those of the staff, faculty advisor, Publications Board, SGA, or the administration of Birmingham-Southern College.

Copyright 1994 by the editors of Quad and Birmingham-Southern College.



Oil Pastel - 10.125" x 13.785"

Catherine Brown - *Elle of Love*

Contents

COVER ART:

Front

John Irons - Shelter

Back

Joey Williams - Stillness

FICTION

If I Were A Good Man	4	Virgil P. Fowler
The Flute Man's Story	14	Allyson Fertitta
Meanie	21	Helen Chandler
Gretel	40	Adrienne Simon
Agarella	49	Julie Dykes

POETRY

July 11, 1994	9	Laura Underwood
Morning Toast	10	Clay McCaslin
Indian Summer	11	Robert Wingard
A Girl Smokes	11	Thomas Diasio
Barefoot on Red Brick	14	Danny Milner
Carbon Hill (A Short, Happy Life)	13	Leslie Nuby
BSC	20	Jonathan Edwards
Meathooks	30	Carolyn Hembree
Bluebeard Speaks. . .	32	Finley Bullard
The Cool Cat Cafe	34	Carolyn Hembree
Intentional Ice Skating	36	Danny Milner
ten o'clock news	38	Jennifer Kelly
	38	Peggy Fackliss
Opus I	45	Chris Lasseter
we hate and are each other	46	Leslie Nuby
	48	J.T. Ennis
Edward Hopper's New York Movie. . .	54	Finley Bullard
Xanadu	56	Clay McCaslin

ART

Elle of Love	2	Catherine Brown
Alicia	12	Catherine Brown
Zelda	27	Tori Simpson
	31	Catherine Jones
Shelter 2 and 3	28-29	John Irons
	29	Brandon McIntosh
Too Many Pills	35	Catherine Brown
	37	Catherine Jones
	39	Thomas Diasio
Before, During, & After Chemo	44	Catherine Brown
Evasion	47	Brandon McIntosh
	55	Eric Sullivan

If I Were A Good Man

...Thursday in Los Angeles another John Doe was proclaimed dead. Apparently the night's freezing conditions took this man's life in the doorway of the Sherwood Forest Apartment complex. A Miss Clair McGraph found the body as she was leaving her apartment. At a brief graveside service on Friday, a woman asked if anyone had any words to say. No one did.

...A New Mexico man was convicted of engaging in sexual acts with his daughter and was sentenced to 12 years in prison. Prosecutors said the abuse occurred a year after the man and his wife were divorced and he was given primary custody by a Navajo tribal court.

...In Los Angeles, a local chapter of Mensa, the organization for people with high IQ's, is under fire from some of its members for publishing articles advocating the extermination of people who are homeless, retarded, or old.

THIS JUST IN...

Reports around the globe confirm the evidence that a race of Yeti have descended from the Appalachian Mountain chain somewhere in Tennessee. They seem peaceful and wise. They are suspected to be tied in with the sudden increase in the homeless population, possibly forming a coalition. Do they have a hidden agenda? Sources report references were made to Nixon AND "voodoo economics". UN troops are now being sent to surround and apprehend these savage conspirators. They ARE considered dangerous. The significance of this is uncertain. Film at eleven.

That is all for National and International News at 6. This is Dean Dinning reporting from New York. Have a good night.

...I'd Talk With You More Often Than I Do

"...When the Lord restores the captive people, Jacob will rejoice, Israel will be glad. Amen."

Psaln 14

About a half an hour later...

Finally averting his eyes from the snow-filled 16 inch Magnavox, Frank catches a glimpse of his per-

sonal caterers again reinforcing their punctuality by not only preparing his meal but spreading this entree across his buffet by promptly 6:30.

"Ah well, let's dig in boys. What's for dinner tonight, Jules?"

"A superbly boiled lobster complemented by stuffed crab and topped off with the finest sauted mushrooms."

"Thank you my dear sir, I do give my compliments to the Chef."

"I will tell him, Frank, I'm sure he'll be delighted."

"Oh, and before I forget, a bit of Zinfadel for the meal if you will."

"Why of course, how silly of me to forget. I must be going quite mad."

"Mad? Did you say mad?"

"As a hatter, Frank. As a hatter."

"Never call yourself mad, sir, for mad is you are not. Now if you were to serve the head of John the Baptist on a silver platter, that would be mad."

"Quite mad indeed. I beg your pardon."

"I believe I'll turn in quite early tonight, so make sure I'm in bed by 9:30 if you will."

"It's already taken care of."

Strutting like the rarest of birds, Frank eloquently sits at the head of his dining table reciting his arrogance.

"I'm going to opium dens! Yes, opium dens, dens of vice and criminals' hangouts, Mother...They call me Killer, Killer Wingfield, I'm leading a double-life, a simple, honest warehouse worker by day, by night a dynamic czar of the underworld, Mother."

Relentless applause filled the room as Tennessee Williams rolled from Frank's mouth and into the ears of his dearest of friends. Only from Frank did they ever hear such beauty, for they seldom read themselves, and more seldom went to see a performance. Their entertainment is usually tied to the TV. This is true especially for Ernest. Ernest is a hardcore addict. From Seinfeld to Sesame Street, there is no stopping the man.

"Shit, I forgot! I have to finish my letter," exclaimed Frank.

"You better hurry if you want to get to bed by 9:30."

Frank wanders towards a lamplit table in the corner housing a back broken green spiral notebook. This

little green notebook is an asylum for poetry, journal entries, letters, and other life-sucking genius. And Frank does serve the head of John the Baptist in his subtitles and marginal thoughts.

About twenty minutes later, the Chef tactfully interrupts Frank and reminds him of his bed time request. With brief salutations Frank prepares himself for another night of melodic dreams and sleepless backaches.

"I'm gonna turn in, guys. Ya'll take it easy."

"Well I'm gonna head on, Frank, I'll see ya bright and early," retorts Ernest with a sly grin.

"All right, well have a good night and stay outta trouble."

"Hell, I can't do both."

"Well do whatever suits yer fancy. I'll See ya 'round."

Finishing his nightly preparations, Frank takes the worn shoes from his weathered feet and, although not a very religious man, prays his nightly request:

...I pray the Lord my soul now take. Amen.

Dear Clair,

I suppose we diverged at the wood. We're supposed to learn from our history, not dive head first into an empty pool. How quickly you must forget. Even the historical mighty monarchies had a bum queen or two. You're quite a queen aren't you-*just* like daddy. I might not be all that, but I'm a man. I'm not quite a pickle, but I'm a man. Are you happy? Rose of Sharon how I love thee. And almost in the words of Dr. Seuss:

Be True To Thy Brother,
Frank

Tonight
Self Defense Seminar
6:00 P.M.--9:30 P.M.
Andrew D. Knedlik Civic Center
\$6.00 per person

Good evening, I'm Sergeant William S. Raney and I'm here to teach you the basic skills of self defense. Let me begin by telling you that almost ninety percent of the people on the streets are out to get you. First we will begin by demonstrating a few basic holds and maneuvers. Initially the vagrant will attempt to lure you in by using certain hooks such as asking for change. **The first rule is to prevent this from happening.** To do this...

Leaving the seminar, the night appears even gloomier than ever. The clouds seem to erase the full

moon and the clear night air takes on the disgust of a smog. Her normal air of confidence broken doesn't allow her newly found defense comrades to see her tiger-like business tact and her I-will-eat-you-alive social control. As she crosses the ill-lit threshold of the parking deck, she senses a mild chill of danger in her pores. Goosebumps of sorts, but not so pleasing. Finally she catches a glimpse of what her senses are telling her. There is a mild mannered man sitting between two cars shielding his weathered body from the cold night wind. In an instant she tenses her muscles as she hurriedly walks to her car.

"Ma'am, I'm just here to preach the word and collect an offerin' to help the boys at the shelter. Do you believe in the word, ma'am?"

"Get the hell away from me!"

"Please, ma'am, could you help save a soul to-night?"

She feels like Custer staring with her fiery eyes into the eyes of Crazy Horse on the banks on the Little Big Horn river. She is the sultry bitch with fire in her eyes formulating the answer. Crazy Horse will not kick Custer's ass this time.

As he raises his arms in peace, Clair, drunk on adrenaline, fears for her life. As her pepper spray burns his flesh and blinds his eyes, Clair jumps into her '86 lime green pontiac, slams into reverse, and accidentally hits the vagrant as she quickly darts to her house.

NEWS FLASH

A 43 year old homeless man by the name of Ernest Monroe died this evening of hemorrhaging and a concussion caused by a severe blow to the lower torso and head. An investigation indicates that this gentleman was struck down by an automobile across from the Andrew D. Knedlik Civic Center. If anyone has any information pertaining to this crime please call the crime center at 587-4213.

On this third day of December, in the year of our Lord...

"Ernest, my man, how did ya get down here to us folks and start showin' us the way," says Emory. "How did the word touch you, friend."

"All my life...No. I won't start out like that. I would not lie to you my friend. Ya see, I went to seminary in about '69. I was a pretty straight fella all through high school. I was makin' A's & B's and I truly had a passion for God. Well I was ordained in the Baptist church by the time I was twenty-three. I had a wonderful life with a beautiful and lovin' wife. She was my high school sweetheart. A year after I was preachin' down at Covenant Baptist Church, my wife took her own life. I found some old buddies of

mine I knew in high school and I started doin' a little drinkin'. By this time I had done already left the church. I started drinkin more and more and smokin' a couple of joints now and then. My buddies were on the move, so I went with them up to New York City. That's when I was introduced to acid. There wasn't any paper acid--it was just tabs at the time. I spends a tab of Purple Haze & the high was long lastin', but I had somebody to watch over me so I didn't trip out too bad. I didn't have a bad trip the first time. Another time that I took it--what I did was decide to take a tab by myself. I took a tab of black...no they called it macrodot. A mixture of orange sunshine or black macrodot or somethin'. Well anyway I had a bad trip and it kept me high for about four or five days. I had to go to the hospital 'cause I was so frantic where I thought I was goin' crazy because it kept me up so high, you know. And I just couldn't come down. The doctor had injected me with somethin' to bring me down."

"Thorazine?"

"I don't know but I figured that the LSD and the Marijuana was just messin' with my memory so I decided to try a new drug. That was the summer of '69--the May of '69--no the summer of '71. I started snortin' cocaine & also started snortin' heroin because--they call it speedball--because they mix it together and snort it. You know--toot it. You know. The rush so high--boom. I like to get high. The first time I got high it made me sick. You know, throw up--vomit. But after that you just be mellow, blasted for about four or five hours. You understand what I'm sayin'?" One night I happened to pass out. You understand. O.D. They had to rush me to the hospital. I didn't have no pulse, no respiration, no heartbeat, no nothin'. Clinically dead really. By that point of my life I didn't know where I was. By the grace of the good Lord, I'm still here. After that I left New York and came back down here. I needed to spread the word. That was my *true* callin' to the Lord. Nobody was gonna let me preach down here though. The Baptist church had even takin' away my license by that point. That's when I found the mission here. They let me preach for my keep and I get to spread the word of my savior Jesus Christ. That's why I'm so thankful for this place right here. Emory, my good man, that's about it. We better round up the troops 'cause it's about time to start spreadin' that word again. Help me out willya."

"Sure, man, no problem. Hey guys let's round up, it's time for the word."

All of the men at the mission unreluctantly wander over to the rows of chairs in front of the podium

as Emory hands out a beaten up hymnal and the King James Bible to each man. With his weather worn experience on his scarred and hunched over body, Ernest begins to speak his heart as every man in the room has his mind locked on every word Ernest says. They love this man. They respect this man. He is the one inspiration they have left.

"...There they are in great dread, for god is with the righteous generation. You would put to shame the counsel of the afflicted, but the Lord is his refuge. Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When the Lord restores His captive people, Jacob will rejoice, Israel will be glad."

Psaln 14

...I'd Understand The Spaces Between Friends

On this twenty-seventh day of August, in the year of our Lord, Frank Delanor McGraph slowly steps from his father's cherry red BMW onto the mysterious land of Buxbaum Institute, a most respected menagerie five miles away from Wanky Willie's Billiards and Tittie Bar.

"This is where millions of young boys have, over a four year period, been transformed into young men," says Mr. McGraph who often frequented the place when he was in college at Buxbaum.

"Oh, yeah dad, sure."

"You sure as hell won't find no faggots there."

"Whatever dad."

"Remember--No leaving campus your first semester. No associating unless it's pussy. It will interfere with your grades. If you make out good, you may get to bring your car second semester. We love you and we'll call you tonight."

By this point, though, Frank isn't really listening anymore. Frank knows that this day is not just another day. As he looks across the campus, Frank imagines several paths chaotically pulling at each other--all of them emerging from Frank's worn sneakers. Beside him stands a sign with arrows pointing in the directions of each and every path. One sign says, "to the end of your rope" as another says "through the eye of the storm." Frank does not have time to read them all but at last glance he smiles as he notices the paths "to the place where laughter lives" and "to courage's den." Frank knows now that he is in for...he doesn't know what he's in for.

"...Frank! Frank! Frank! Are you daydreaming again? Dammit I'm gonna pull your ass outta school if you do that anymore you sorry ass. Go give your momma some suger. Look! You made her cry!"

"Sorry, I love you momma. See ya dad." as he kisses one unit and coldly shakes the hand of the other.

On this twenty-seventh day of November, in the year of our Lord. Lounging on a green velvet couch periodically pierced by the mark of a cigarette as well as stained by a distinct odor mixed of piss and nicotine, Frank sips on a bottled beer. Taking another sip of beer and a drag from his Camel, Frank thinks about the changes he's gone through in the last few months.

"All my life I've learned that Christ is my savior, niggers are black, money is the key to life, and faggots are the key to death. Most everything I've always known to be 'the truth' is a complete delusion. I've lost my noodle. Maybe I just abuse it too much. I stroke the kitty all I want and I still feel less than a man. Maybe I just abuse it too much."

"Hey Frank," cries the twangy voice of Allie, "get off that bum ass of yours and let's go do somethin'."

"Like what?"

"Oh, I don't know, let's go rent a movie or somethin'."

"Oh yeah, that's real fuckin' productive."

"If you're gonna be that way, you can just get out of my damn apartment."

"You wouldn't do that. You love me too much."

"No I don't, I hate you."

(Simultaneously underneath their breaths)

"Birch!"

"Bastard!"

Quickly Frank grabs her and kisses her, falsifying and mocking their entire argument.

"I thought you hated me!" giggles Frank as Allie kisses him back."

"Well I guess I got over it."

Neither actually remember how they initially met. Somehow they were both just hanging out with mutual friends and showed up at...well hell if anybody actually knows. Nonetheless they eventually ended up, just like every other day, watching T.V. in Allie's downtown apartment.

"I really can't watch a movie right now Allie, I've got to work on this play for class. You wanna help me? O.K. You read Amanda and I'll read Tom."

Amanda: I don't believe that lie!

Tom: I'm going to opium dens! Yes, opium dens, dens of vice and criminals' hangouts, Mother...

On this third day of December, in the year of our Lord...

"Hey Frank," cried the twangy voice of Allie, "get off that bum ass of yours and lets go do somethin'."

"Like what?"

"Oh, I don't know, let's go rent a movie or somethin'."

"If we're gonna do somethin', Allie, then let's **really** go do somethin' for a change. I'm gonna go to the first street shelter and help out tonight. You're welcome to come along if you want. Ya see, my heads just goin crazy. I've never cared and it's comin' back around. All I'm sayin' is if I were to cry, who would see, Allie. Nobody! I look in the mirror and say, "Hey daddy!" I'm real fuckin' confused right now, Allie, and I think if we do somethin' it may help me get things straight."

"Are you on another god-damned altruist kick again, Frank. What's been up with you lately. You've been goin' nuts over every little nothin' that comes along...All right, I'll go with you. I need somethin' to make me feel like a hero for a week or two."

"It's not like that. It shouldn't make you feel like a hero."

"Whatever. Let's just hurry up and get goin'."

At the shelter...

"...When the Lord restores the captive people, Jacob will rejoice, Israel will be glad. Amen."

Psaln 14

About a half an hour later...

"Hi, I'm Reverend William J. Mooney, but you can call me Chef. You two must be Frank and Allie. We sure do appreciate your help. You can go on into the kitchen if you like, were gettin' ready to serve dinner. Let me just go right ahead and tell you that ninety percent of these people from the streets are not out to get you. So don't you fret none. Most of these fellas are pretty good guys."

"I appreciate you lettin' us help out," says Frank, "I'm probably gettin' as much out of it as they are."

"Yeah, it kinda makes me feel like a hero!"

"Shut up, Bitch."

"Sorry, Frank, I was just bein' honest."

"These boys get to bed at 9:30 'round here so we better call 'em to dinner," replies the reverend.

Rev. Mooney then leaves the two with the food as he rounds up his 'children' for supper.

"It's time for supper, boys," cries the reverend. "Will someone give the blessing? How about you, Ernest."

"Yes sir, I'll be glad to. Bless this food to thy bodies and thus to thy service. Amen."

"Amen," the men cry collectively.

Soon the pack of hungry men begin to nudge their way through the line. An elderly man of about fifty or so wearing a tattered Buxbaum Institute

sweatshirt catches Frank's eye. As soon as the stranger reaches him, he begins to speak.

"Ah well, let's dig in boys. What's for dinner tonight Jules?"

"Well, we've got mashed potatoes and chicken." replies Frank.

"Thank you my dear sir, I do give my compliments to the Chef."

"I'll tell him for you, I'm sure he'll appreciate it."

"Oh, and before I forget, a bit of Zinfadel for the meal if you will."

"Well there's some tea in that container over there."

"Crazy old coot!"

"Don't say that, Bitch. He's just a little confused. It could happen to any of us."

After dinner is served, Frank curiously wanders over to the queer old man in the Buxbaum rags. Not sure of what to make of the situation, Frank decides to hold back for a few minutes. Out of the corner of his eye, Frank glances at the television only to catch a few seconds of a news brief on the National and International News at 6.

...Thursday in Los Angeles another John Doe was proclaimed dead. Apparently the nights freezing conditions took this man's life in the doorway of the Sherwood Apartment complex. A Miss Clair Mcgraph found the body as she was leaving her apartment.

At a brief graveside service on Friday, a woman asked if anyone had any words to say. No one did.

Finally averting his eyes from the snow-filled 16-inch Magnavox, Frank again slowly approaches the stranger.

"Hello sir, how are you doing?"

"Quite well, stranger."

"I was wanting to talk with you for a moment--if you don't mind...I was wondering how you...well, actually I mean how...I mean, you seem so content."

"I am."--"Actually I'm extremely happy."

"How do you mean? I don't quite follow."

"Years ago I was in college at apparently Buxbaum Institute when I had a vision of--well, of this place--the place where laughter lives. I had a tough time makin' it here. I really had to go through the eye of the storm before I made it though. I'm no crazy--don't you think that. At least I didn't end up in the steam tunnels below the school or anything. I just realized I was hurtin' people, especially my friends--playin' 'em just like they was a game and all. There was no sincere love or care in me. My love was just my lay. She was 'my bitch' to train. I trained her 'til I cried. That finally ended. I think I'm a man now. I'm

not much of a pickle, but at least I'm good.

...You'd Never Cry Another Tear Again

Why is daddy screaming? It's such a beautiful day. Why are you suffocating yourself, your head covered under your white patterned comfort as you're curled fetally with your toes peeking out? Why is the blanket not big enough to protect you? Are you crying? Why? What are they like? Have you seen one in a long time? No. Why then do you not see one in him. Why do you stay then? Because of me? Do you love him? Well why then? Because he takes care of you? He also creates the bruises that need to be taken care of. I know you love me. I'll do better next time. Take my hand and we'll go away together. I know we really can't...but one day...I love you mommy.

He: Why does he do it?

She: Daddy says that it's to train you to grow up right. He says if ya got discipline and ya got money you'll always be happy.

He: Why's daddy always trainin' her to grow up right? I thought she was already grown up.

She: I think he's just settin' an example. My teacher always says that grown-ups always set examples for kids.

He: You know a lot Clair. Guess what.

She: What Frank?

He: I showed my girlfriend my thing.

She: That's against the law!

He: No it's not.

She: It's against God's law! Daddy told me I'd go to hell if I ever saw a thing. He showed me his once so I'd know what not to look for. It was kinda funny lookin'. Felt like a pickle, but not quite as lumpy.

He: Mine don't feel like a pickle. Feels more like a noodle.

She: Yours is wrong then. I'm gonna be good. I'm gonna be a good millionaire queen when I grow up.

He: Daddy says I'm gonna be a man when I grow up. I guess I'll be a man when I grow up. I'm gonna be good at it though.

Momma! Clair says she gonna be a millionaire when she grows up. She says she's gonna be a good millionaire queen. What were you gonna be when you were little? I don't understand. I think I'm gonna go to bed before he comes home. O.K. I'll be sure and say my prayers. Night-night momma. I love you.

...I pray the Lord my soul now take. Amen.

God Listens To The Prayers Of Bums And Little Children.

—Virgil P. Fowler

July 11, 1994

After supper I walk
into the back yard
to throw potato peels over the fence
and watch the owls that live
in our lightning-struck pecan tree.

If the mosquitoes can be stood
I'll watch the birds wing out over
the soybean field
into a heavy summer dusk.
When they fly back I can see their faces.

Of course I try to make
something too-meaningful out of all this—
owls bring wisdom to my twenty-first
summer, etc.—
but it turns out that they are simply
one more thing that amazes me about this
home place:

that such an old house can still hold up
thundering life,
that I go home every summer and never get
bored.

—Laura Underwood

Morning Toast

egg yolks and jelly
on the kitchen table
another morning
inside my skin
before the day comes crawling in
the comfort of my buttered toast
my electric guitar
screaming
the answers I never found
the questions I haven't thought to ask
the solitude I continue to choose
was born to choose
it is the sum of me.

today is a cold day
air molecules brittle
and snappy
the way i like them
taking walks beside old houses
peering into each one
wondering about their secret lives
as perhaps someone wonders
about the secrets behind my door
the comfort of my buttered toast
the kinds of drinks i fix
when i'm feeling lonely

last week i took to smoking cigars
something new
the eternal craving
a reminder of sugary promises
i made as a boy
to people i never talk to anymore
their memories remain
as the icy feet of someone in my bed
on a cold morning
like the one i'm staring into now.

in my head
i have created a voice
the voice of a nymph
who trills it when i love her
excites the child in me
the one that fished for crawdads
and played in solitude
in a world of manufactured dreams
i have created a voice
that makes me feel that way again.

even now with my buttered toast
my egg yolks and jelly
my forgotten promises
and my mounting weaknesses
behind my closed doors
and my walls of suspicion
behind all of my manufactured dreams
i can hear that voice
i can feel that way again.

—Clay McCaslin

Indian Summer

The day is wrapped in velvet,
a momentous pause;
The sun strokes the skin
with sensual distraction,
relaxing the soul.
Do I hear sirens whisper
In silent loveliness?
Duty and destiny seem far away
and so unreal.
But then it passes
and I push on.

—Robert Wingard

A Girl Smokes

Gently, gingerly, her hand pulls me from my pack, sliding me
between her fingers.
She brings me to her lips.
She drags in a slow breath as she touches her flame to me.
Inhaling my essence into her own body, the warmth fills her.
Her shaking slows, and she relaxes her grip around me.
She pauses a moment, pondering what I do not know.
Then she draws in another breath, and another.
I burn down slowly, losing myself in her and our surroundings.
As I reach the end, she rubs me out and walks away.

—Thomas Diasio



Black and White Photograph - 7.25" x 9.25"

Catherine Brown - *Alicia*

carbon hill (a short, happy life)

when you leave
i want to say: it was easy
for you was
it not
wipe my own hands clean, lay blame—
in the half-light i distort
your image, shrink you
lace my fingers together, curl over
your head, trap you against my palm
trace the subtle curve of cheek as
you slip along valleys engraven there
or
gnash my teeth
over your weeping eye
until only pulp remains
lash out concealed anger
let fall a steady drip of viscous hatred
pull you
 down
 with me
into this impossible longing,
puerile yearning: say yes yes yes it
can be done
when you leave i will surface in the faces
of others you meet
when you nightmare i
will be the woman who
thrust you from her womb
the woman whose fluttering heart stalls
a sister
 lover
 confidant
the girl whose name you mouthed with
illicit lips
choked with a love-cry, a smoldering crush—
this is not over yet.

—Leslie Nuby

The Flute Man's Story

My name is Lamar Roberts, otherwise known as the Flute Man. I don't know if you heard of me; I was the flute player at Rockefeller's, up until last week.

I'm a musician; I'm a floutist. They say I'm the best. That's what I've heard, everywhere I go that's what I've heard. I'm the best. I've been playing the flute for 23 years.

Flute Man loves publicity. Lamar, I don't know what he likes. He loves his children. Other than my mother, couple of my sisters, and my, and my children. . . that's pretty much all I got.

Right now, my children are fifteen, fourteen, thirteen, twelve, nine, seven, two and a half, and two.

Homelessness became part of my life here in Birmingham.

I was, um, battling a crack problem in, well I still am, and going to college at Three Rivers Community College and carrying a 3.032 grade point average with a crack problem and a fiancée and two families.

One thing I want to get straight is people think addiction has got to do with drugs. Addiction does not have to do with drugs. It does not have to do with alcohol. It doesn't have to do with cigarettes. Addiction is a disease; those are just symptoms.

I've been an addict for thirty years. I'm thirty-four years old.

That's right. My first addiction was large black women. It's an addiction. How did I come to that realization? Uh, there's a lady. There's a lady when I was a kid, and I just thought the sun rose and set in her ass, 'scuse my language. Excuse my language but that's the way it is. And, one day I was sitting on the floor, I was sitting on the floor and she didn't see me, and she wore dresses all the time. I mean, I was four, but I was sitting on the floor on my butt. I was probably this high. And she came and she stood right over me. She didn't even know I was standing right next to her, and I could see straight up her dress. And. . . the things I saw on her, I was just amazed. And then, I mean she had, and her legs were bare too. And uh, she rubbed, she rubbed, her leg rubbed up against my

face, that's how she realized I was down there. But the feeling I felt, you know that they say about love, that they say love is a feeling that you feel when you're about to feel a feeling that you've never felt before? That was the feeling, and I mean I was high, it was a high. It was, when I felt her leg rub against my face, I mean it was almost. . . like a high. And she picked me up, and I couldn't stop laughing. I mean, I was buzzed. I just wanted to do something, to, I don't know what.

So anyway, I've been an addict for thirty years. Being an addict means that you. . . your mind just works a little different than other people's. And things that seem like they would be, just everyday rational things to do, and uh, and uh, for the addict it's, you know, irrationality is the order of the day, you know. Intelligence has nothing to do with it, addicts are among the most intelligent in the world. You know, uh, Sigmund Freud was an addict. Cocaine. Sigmund Freud is the father of cocaine in the United States. He brought cocaine to America. He was the one that told, put it in! Put it in that soda! That's a good, that's a good, that's a good idea.

Yes. Sigmund Freud got really pretty stupid in his later years. Yeah, he introduced cocaine, he thought cocaine was the wonder drug, you know, could cure so many problems because it gave people such a feeling of well-being. See, it was a quick fix-it for him, so he figured it was good for everyone. But it wasn't. Of course, he had a lot of bizarres and ideals, I think he had a big, uh, addiction problem in the first place. You know, I think he was an addict of all that, way back, blaming a lot of things on other people in your life instead of looking at yourself. That's what, uh, that's what Freud's specialty was, it's just you. . . it's because you hate your mother, cause she never let you have a dog or she uh, your dad beat you because, he was that kind of person, he was in that kind of position.

Uh, you know, back to me though. Being, uh, being a musician has gotten me where, has gotten me where I am now, has gotten me to. . . make so many

comebacks. That's always been my loophole in life, you know. I mean right now I have nothing, I have no clothes, I mean I lost everything, recently. I just had, just came back from a broken jaw, I mean a dislocated jaw, and a broken nose, which is still broken. And uh, all that was because of drugs and women. You know, I let a woman get me into a position where someone snuck in the house while I was having sex with her. And that woman I didn't really even know, which was really not my style, but being an addict, someone's just offering me free sex, sort of welcome to the neighborhood type deal and I was like wow! I was kinda impressed. So I took it. Not thinking. Feeling too good. You know, one thing about being an addict, you can't feel too good. And you can't feel too sad. You kinda have to, you know, uh, police that. And my problem is I have a thing where I like to feel too good. And I always end up losing a lot, cause I'm not too careful and there's over here, there's the devil sending me the big black woman with the big butt. And the next thing I know, I'm putting myself in a position where I can get hurt, or robbed, or something.

How'd this happen? Okay. I was this close, I haven't seen my son in a decade, he doesn't even know I'm his father, my fourteen year-old son. I finally tracked his uncle down, I'm kind of resourceful. They all live here now. And I, I moved in with him, and the next day, I's gonna hopefully get to see my son. And I haven't seen his mother in a decade either, so it was gonna be really interesting. So, when the woman, when this happened, it was my . . . son's uncle's stuff that got stolen. Vacuum cleaner, VCR, mail order, and a few other things I guess, But people in his neighborhood convinced him that he had, that I had done it, and I didn't do it. I was, but I panicked, instead of calling police, or something like that, I ran out looking for the people. I got back, there was a note on the door saying that, "You won't be a free man tomorrow," and all this whole crazy stuff. So then I found, so then I went out and looked for some more and I came back. And when I was coming back I saw him, and he was coming at me, and there was two other guys coming down behind me in the alley. And then when I realized what was going on, I took off running. They caught me. All I had on was a pair of shorts, pair of tennis shoes, and a t-shirt, and a pair of short, real short white socks. They caught me, they beat me on the . . . kicked me, stomped me. I got up, ran, they caught me, beat me, and stomped me, and I ran again, and they caught me beat me stomped me and I got

up, and somebody yelled five-O and I got up and ran and one guy had tripped me. When they yelled five-O they all took off running. Five-O of course means the police, you know, like the Hawaii Five-O. That's the street thing now. That's police. That's how I ended up. I wish I could make him know that's how it happened. I was just being a sucker.

And I was extremely sexually active, as far back as I could talk.

I was, at the age of five I had two girlfriends. One was named Tracy Smith, she was my black girlfriend, and Theresa Sawyer, she was my white girlfriend. And, I was over at Theresa Sawyer's mother's house I guess, maybe a couple of years ago, and, in Springfield, Ohio, she told me, she said, "I remember when you asked Theresa if you could show her your thing, and she said, 'Well, I have to ask my momma.' She went, and she came and asked me, 'Lamar said, can he show me his thing?' " and she said, "No, you tell Lamar that he, to go home and to take his thing with him." She caught us behind the couch, with our pants down rubbing butts, stuff like that, you know. That was at five years old.

I come from a family of eggheads. So is my wife. She's sicker than I am, though. My wife is really sick. She gets multiple, she has Multiple Personality Disorder, she's an alcoholic, calls herself a recovering drug addict, but she's a alcoholic so I don't, I don't know. I know she still drinks. I haven't seen my wife since...March? I haven't seen her since March.

We got married October 12, 1980. She started abusing me, uh, April 18, 1981. Emotionally, mentally, physically, uh, what kind of specifics would you like? I lived in a true twilight zone. My wife tried to kill me with icepicks and, uh, she has a personality named Lisa that hates me...uh, I mean she almost hit our daughter Miechela with an icepick trying to kill me. Miechela jumped in between us, screaming hysterically stop! stop! stop! and when she almost hit Miechela with the icepick I just picked her up and pinned her against the wall. I told her, I said you're gonna have to stop this right now or else I'm gonna have to kill you. I wasn't, there was nothing else I could think of to do. My wife abused me over ten years, she made me feel like a ghost in my own house. If I said the sky was blue, she'd get someone else and say, "Hey! What color is the sky?" My wife really made my life a pure hell. Uh, that's how cocaine came into the picture, in a way. I found this stuff, I said, "Oh, Ginger would love this!" And I found out Ginger was crazy about it. And that made it. I was, at that

point I was so far gone, trying to grab on to some sort of life board for my marriage.

It was October, October 12, 1987, uh this was when she started smoking. I went into a \$4736 a week treatment center on December the 26th, 1987. I stayed for seven days, then I woke up. I had a nightmare all that night, and uh, I called my bodyguard, this is in Atlanta, I said, "Troy, come and get me"...

And when he got there, I said, "We need to hurry and get to the house, Ginger got my check." I made like \$615 a week take home, and uh, Ginger had my check, and was having a crack party. The dream was real. I dreamed where the party was, I dreamed the people who were at the party, I dreamed everything that happened. And it all happened. When I got home, Ginger had \$240, had paid no bills, had bought no groceries. I said, "Do you know what I have to do now? I have to take this money and go buy crack with it! So I can sell it, so I can make this money back.

So anyhow, anyway. Being married to the wicked witch was definitely a bad thing. I used to have women come up to me and offer to sleep with me because they know how bad my wife treated me. See, our sex life was also hell. This was the equivalent to foreplay and everything else, "Come on, hurry up, let's get this over with before I...change my mind." My wife was very wicked, wicked. Well, not was, she is. She just had a baby by her twenty year-old boyfriend. That's her seventh child, her ninth pregnancy. We had six children.

I should start this from the beginning, I'm sorry. I lived, I'm from Springfield, Ohio, I was a professional musician in Ohio. I was born in Springfield, Ohio, into a family of eggheads. My father worked for International Harvesters for thirty-eight years, and, uh, he also sold real estate. We had a very extremely comfortable life. And he owned properties and I worked on the properties. My father and I were among the very first of the YMCA Indian Guides program, started back in the sixties. Fathers and sons: pals forever. My father was, when people ask you, they say, "Who's your hero?" I never really grew up with heroes, but my hero was my dad. My dad was a hell of a man. He was hard and soft, he was smart, he was uh, naive. He was old fashioned, he believed that time could stand still. He was a mystery, yet he stayed completely in reality.

I started out life with two sisters and two brothers; today I have three sisters and one brother. All of them older. In 1986 I found out I had a sister I didn't know I had. My oldest brother turned gay, no my

second oldest brother turned gay, and my other brother died in Vietnam.

So, anyway, at the age of, well, at the age of ten or eleven, I saw my brother spending a hundred dollars a day on heroin. I said, if I get one person like him, and I figured if, I figured like a hundred percent markup, I said I could, I could make a fortune. Yeah. One person is gonna spend a hundred dollars a week on a drug, I said, in the seventies, that could make me rich! So greed was always part, you know, big part of it, part of being an addict.

Today I should say that I am on the recovery, so a lot of those things aren't part of me today, because a lot of my knowledge is starting to become wisdom. You know it's a damn shame that it took me to end up in the Salvation Army.

Anyway, so I started selling drugs at the age of twelve. I started selling pills, and of course everything had to be really clever and elaborate. I didn't stand on the street corner selling drugs, so I came into pills.

I was doing everything in an organized fashion. I was a drug dealer, not a drug pusher. I had a paper route, and even though I lived in a middle class to upper middle class neighborhood, I had drug addicts on my paper route. I had 120 customers, so it wasn't easy. I sold drugs on my paper route to the customers. And uh, I always kept fairly large amounts of marijuana so, you know, sometimes I'd even sell a little bit of that, if someone just asked me about it. But by the age of thirteen I had graduated to selling heroin, which was my objective in the first place. I set up a shooting gallery, which is a place where you sell heroin, and the people shoot the heroin, and sit there and lie, and slobber on themselves. And uh, of course then that meant I had to carry a gun.

Guns are easy, just like that, just like now you could go buy a gun from anyone. And, you know, if you're an organized drug dealer, getting a gun was like, I need a gun, I need a snub-nosed thirty-eight, or I coulda said I wanted solid nickel, someone would have made sure that's what I had. Cause money is not the only thing we got, it's power. You know, you could, power is a primitive mind. As long as you present yourself as powerful, people will look at you as something, someone with power.

Yeah. It's all just part of the...it's all bullshit. What did Eddie Murphy say? "Being a cop is all bullshit and experience." Yeah, bullshit and experience. Even if you don't have experience, you can bullshit experience. If you know just enough about anything, or you can pick up on things real quick, you can bullshit.

They call it 'Fake it till you make it.' You can do that in just about any situation in life. I worked for a marketing firm. I didn't know anything about marketing. I told them I said, well last year I made \$300,000 selling marijuana, and I gave \$250,000 to corrupt officials. But the point was they were kinda impressed with that, that from March to August I could make \$300,000.

I started out telemarketing, and I moved up to Marketing Specialist, and that meant I would babysit clients, stuff like that. But you know, just being an ideal man. It's easy. It's really easy.

By fourteen, I had shot a man, at close range. I mean, I probably shot a few, in gun battles. You know cause uh, heroin's very territorial. It's not like crack where you fight for blocks, where you're standin'...no, heroin's a, customers are territory. And if you sell, if I take part of your clientele you're a really big business man. If I take enough of your clientele away, it'll start being a problem. You know, people will start to try to get rid of you.

It's big business, it really is. It's sad that drugs have to be such a big business, but we unfortunately have a drug-laden culture. Drugs are everywhere in the United States. People take drugs to wake up, to go to sleep, to make them feel things that they could feel all by themselves. We take drugs to medicate. But then, I wish I had realized this way back then. I would have never started.

And, at the age of fourteen I got out of the drug business. Cause it's not like the mafia. I was just fourteen, I could walk away, I was just a kid. And uh, it was my organization, so it was kind of easy. And, at the age of fifteen, I was accused of federal bank fraud. The FBI had me take thousands of handwriting tests. I cried and cussed 'em out, cause I was supposed to be the victim but they were making it like I was the suspect. Then I told my dad, who was like, very influential in the community, and he went down there and he went off on them and I didn't tell him I had already went off on them. So I made him look kind of foolish, in a way. He understood me being upset, but he came home and he went off on me.

Oh, I did get a whipping, when I was four years old, for smoking a cigarette. My dad was cool, he smoked cigarettes. I just wanted to see what it was like. I took a cigarette and lit it on the stove and went outside to swing. After a while I heard a door slam, so I threw that cigarette on the ground, stubbed it with my foot and kept on swingin'. Next thing I knew I was airborne, in the house, and at the phone stand.

And, uh, my father bear my ass.

I started smoking on March 28, 1972. In fact, that's the first time I ever got high off of chemicals. I smoked my first joint, my first cigarette, well, officially, for the next six years. What else? Oh, I did some coke. Seemed like I did a blue tip, I took my first drink of wine. I hate alcohol; you can't pay me to drink alcohol.

I mean I did drink it though, as a teenager, you know, now and then, a couple of swallows out of a bottle. When I was standin' around with my buddies. I remember a time when I was a teenager and we used to drink wine and go to fights. We'd take the wine and go up behind someone cause you know they're all hyped up, watching everyone fight. You walk by somebody, you just keep on walking by, you don't stop. You SLAP somebody across the back of the head, and you keep on walking. They turn around and what do you think they do? They hit the first person they see. that's exactly what happened. And we would just do that, we'd just walk along and POW! and then we'd get a little further down and POW! and by the time we walk through the crowd, there's at least ten more new fights. And we'd just stand on the outside and drink our wine and say look, aren't they silly! We'd just crack up, cause we were bad people. Yeah, we were bad people. That was when I was in junior high, you know, that was kid stuff to me.

You know, hopping the fence at the game when you got a pocket full of money, they finally catch you and they put you out, and then you just pay your way in and laugh at 'em. Stuff like that, weird stuff. The ambulance people would let you in a lot, let you sneak in the ambulance. I got into games very successfully when I had a pocket full of money. Course, I had \$50 grand in Swiss bank accounts.

That was when I was selling heroin, at thirteen, fourteen. that's another story altogether. I lost that money. It's still there in the bank account, I lost it in the account. I was fourteen when I lost it. Who cares? Money is something that is like time. You always have it until it's gone. You know, you always have time until you don't anymore. And when you don't have time anymore, you're laying in a box, four feet underground. They don't bury people six feet deep anymore. Four feet under the ground, holding your breath forever.

Fifteen, federal bank fraud, okay, we're past that. After that I tried to be a pretty normal kid for the next two or three years. I grew a beard at the age of fifteen, no I wasn't normal!

Come to think of it. At the age of fifteen is also when I learned to run big cons, uh, real estate cons. How to sell real estate that doesn't belong to you. I worked for this team of con men and ladies. They had this real estate con going and they taught me how to do it because I caught them trying to sell property that my father was selling legitimately. They asked me, "What do you want?" I said I want you to teach me what you know, so that's how I learned how to do cons.

These people, they didn't really sell real estate. They set up a real estate office in town, get so many deposits, and break. Get out of town. Go to another town.

I did that for about three months. Then, at the age of sixteen, oh I forgot to tell you. I'm a trained masseur. See, my mother always said I tried to do too many things at once. At the age of twelve, I learned how, I started training to give massages. For the next eighteen months I trained with this African guy. I give the best massages. I just didn't think it would be a good thing to try to do here in Birmingham.

My major in school was music. Of course. Something I could just take home with me and drop my bookbag at the door and go lay down and get up and still get a A.

Being, I don't know, being a musician, it's not so much what I do, it's who I am. It's no matter what anyone's taken from me, or what I've taken from myself, that's the one thing that's always remained consistent in my life since I've been a professional musician. Well, I say all my adult life. I'd say, for the last, at least half my life, I've been a professional, quality musician.

So at the age of five I met Duke Ellington. And Duke Ellington told me something I've carried with me. I've tried to use it all through my life. And it's a good piece of advice, but it's not advice, it's a fact. He said, "I want you to always remember, before you can play the songs that you wanna play, you're gonna have to play a whole bunch of stuff you don't want to play." You know, you can't play what you want to play at first, you play what they want you to play. Then you can play what you want to play. That's, that's, that's a fact of life, that's a universal law, and anyone who gets around that is just fortunate.

I have severe ID problems, identification problems. I don't have a regular job. I would be playing music, I need a flute so bad. I've had twenty-five flutes of my own. The reason that Rockefeller's kept the flute is because I haven't payed for it yet. I used to

come home to the Salvation Army in a white limo. I started in December and it all ended just this Monday.

* * *

The following is from an interview with Harry Keplinger, Jr., the General Manager of Rockefeller's on 20th Street South in Birmingham, where Lamar played as the Flute Man from December to mid-January. The interview took place on January 26, 1995, almost a week after the interview with Lamar.

What Keplinger said helped me to both understand and verify a lot of what Lamar had said because he backed up the story that Lamar told me. I wasn't sure how much I could believe until I heard from another person who knew Lamar that some of his stories were very true. Keplinger spoke freely about his brief professional relationship with Lamar and praised his musical talent, but not the way he lived his life.

Keplinger said he sometimes takes in homeless people and gives them some food and a chance to work, if they seem capable. Lamar approached him in December and arranged such a deal.

HK: He was very well spoken, um, he started name dropping. He knew James Yerby, the guy I had in here who was the band at the time. And, then he asked if James were here, and James wasn't here at that time in the daytime. Then he asked me what he would have to do to get a meal, and, because he knew James and because of his, the way he carried himself and spoke I invited him in and told him I just, you know, I fed him from next door. And then I called James up and got him down here so that he could, uh, so that we could see about trying to help him out, get him off the, you know, get him on his feet. He told me he had a crack problem, he spoke honestly. So then, we made arrangements and got him, paid him a little bit of money. You know you can't give them too much money when they've been down, because then they go right back down. And, we all tried to work with him, and every week there was a different story after pay day. Any time he came into money, I think he's still doing stuff. He would be the last one to admit it. But then the last, the last thing was, uh, he'd moved in with this guy, and the guy kept calling all day. The guy had said he'd stole all his stuff. Did Lamar tell you all that?

ALF: Yeah, he did.

HK: And then the guy beat him up.

ALF: Yeah, he told me all that.

HK: Then, I have a business to run, I can't, you

know I can only go so far. I mean, we, we, I tried to work with him for about a, I guess over a month. Renting a room and trying to, I got him a flute, I still own the flute. It's in there in the drawer.

ALF: Yeah, he told me that because he hadn't paid for it, it was still there.

HK: That's all, all that's true.

ALF: And, when exactly was it that he came to you, or that you found him?

HK: Um, I really am not very good with dates.

ALF: A couple of weeks or a month?

HK: It's been over a month, Uh, it was back before Christmas.

It was back probably around the fifteenth of December.

ALF: And when was it that he quit with you, or...

HK: It's been a couple of weeks.

ALF: A couple of weeks?

HK: It was the night that he called. The guy had been calling us, hassling us all day about the, about wanting Lamar. He said he'd stole all his stuff, and uh I had too much going on, and too many other people depending on us to keep on keeping on.

ALF: Okay, I sat down with him the other day at the Salvation Army and did an interview with him and he was telling me all of this, and our interview got cut short because they had to close up the office we were sitting in, so he didn't get a chance to tell me all

about Rockefeller's. He told me that he had played there and that he just, he kept referring to himself as the Flute Man...

HK: Yeah. what that deal was, I was in the office and I told my Club Manager Berry, I told him to call Lamar up here so I could, you know so I could get with him, and he said Lamar four or five times. Lamar was sitting at the bar and just didn't hear him. I said, "Holler Flute Man." The second he said Flute Man, Lamar turned, "Yes?" So, obviously, that's what he felt better with.

ALF: Right. That's what he saw himself as.

HK: Yeah.

ALF: That's cool. Was he really good?

HK: Yes. He was very good with the flute, very good Flute Man. If it wasn't for the, uh, drugs, uh, he'd be a great asset to himself and to society in general. But he's got a drug problem.

ALF: Do you think if he gets clean, he'll be able to, y'all might want him back?

HK: Do you think he will get clean? Do you think he can get clean?

ALF: I honestly don't know, I...

HK: I don't think so.

ALF: I don't think so, just the story he was telling me, I mean the history he's got with it...

HK: He'll never be clean.

—Allyson Fertitta

BSC

Once there was a man who lived in outer space.
He did not know this; For
He did not know he was alone.
He never made a hit movie, or
Wrote a best-selling novel.
In fact, he didn't do anything.
He just lived there.
One day he met a man
Who was not from outer space
With a giant red hair barette.
the man from outer space looked at him
The strange man looked back (He
Was from Clarkenwelle).
The man from outer space said "Hello".
The strange man said something back,
But the man from outer space didn't understand.
He turned his head and the
strange man vanished.
The man from outer space lived there;
He didn't write books or make movies.
he didn't know he was alone,
Because he was alone and had no awareness of it.
He loved his cat, the Lord.

—Johnathan Edwards

Meanie

The last time I saw William was ten years ago.

We were both living at the Hospitality House shelter for women and children in north Birmingham.

It was a Saturday morning, and we were playing outside in the backyard--patches of coarse grass nearly covered by a portable utility shed and a swingset, and a square of gravel with enough room for about three cars. The whole yard was surrounded by a chain-link fence.

Saturdays had always been me and William's day to do some serious playing.

Summer refused to leave--just like it always does in Alabama. September was just as bad as August. Already the temperature had reached 80 degrees, and by noon it promised to reach at least 95. And it was awfully humid--Mama used to say that humidity does to the air what flour does to chicken broth.

But the heat usually made me happy, because--if it was an especially hot Saturday--Miss Ann would let us turn on the sprinkler for at least a half-hour after lunch. Since school had started, though, William didn't want to play in the water with me. He'd been saying it was sissy and that playing in the sprinkler is a little kid's game. It sure takes away a lot of the fun of sprinklers when you don't have anybody to run with through the water.

Just now, though, we were sitting on the rotting back steps listening to William's new bright yellow transistor radio, and I was checking for exotic worms and spiders underneath the stones in the prickly grass.

We looked up at the same time at the group of about five young boys--two white and three black--walking by outside the gate. They were yelling loud calls at me, like "Hey, baby, you lookin' fine," and "Ummm Ummm Good, girl, that's what you are." I blushed and bowed my head between my knees. I could've gotten up and gone into the house, but I wouldn't want to risk looking stupid in front of any kind of boy--especially junior high boys.

After the boys passed, we sat there in silence for what seemed like ten minutes.

"Man, those dudes are bad," said William.

"Yeah," I said.

I never argued with William. He was a whole two years older than me and a lot taller and much cooler. I knew he only played with me because I was the only other kid at the home. He'd never said it, but I think he liked me because I was the only friend he had who let him have his way all the time. Plus, even none of the boys in his grade liked to catch lightning bugs or worms or spiders and keep them in jars as pets.

We'd spent most of the summer collecting jars for our bugs--we figured peanut butter jars would do the best, so we ate so much peanut butter that Miss Ann had to buy a new jar just about every week, and when she wasn't looking, one of us would sneak the jar from the trash. I don't think she would've gotten mad, but we pretended she would so our scheme would be more fun. William was great at schemes, and he taught me a lot that summer about how to be sneaky when you want something that's against the rules.

But lately William didn't want to look for bugs or even sneak into Miss Ann's chest of drawers and look at her huge bras. He was getting to be real boring.

"I'm bored," he said.

"Me, too. What do you want to do?"

"I want to get out of this stupid place--that's what I want to do."

William turned his head and looked at the house. He looked at it like he'd just declared it his most hated enemy.

"Don't know why that old Miss Ann won't let us play outside this yard. She just don't want us to have no fun."

I didn't understand William. Ever since school had started, he'd been talking real bad about Miss Ann

and his mama and his teachers.

"My teacher's a big fat bitch," he would say, or "Miss Ann sure does have a big ass and a big mouth," or "Man, my mama don't know shit about nothin'."

I had been agreeing with him when he talked like this, partly because he scared me a little bit, and partly because I was hoping he'd forget about how much he hated them so we could have an adventure or something.

But this time I looked up at him and asked, "Why you got to always talk bad about everybody?"

"Look, kid, it's a part of growin' up--you start to see that all these people that is telling you what to do ain't always right. They ain't perfect, but they cop this attitude where they think nobody's right but them and they can just order everybody around like a slave."

"Yeah," I said.

William sure was different than he was in the summer. And real mean sometimes, for no reason at all. One time I brought home a balloon from school--Becky Smithers' mom had brought them and some cupcakes for our class because it was Becky's birthday. My balloon was red, and it said HAPPY BIRTHDAY in big black letters. There were only two red ones in the whole bunch, and me and Tommy Barnett got to them first.

I was going to keep my balloon in my room and tie it to my bed, but when I showed it to William, he took out his pocket knife and popped it. The explosion startled me, and when I looked down my balloon was nothing but little shreds of red rubber on the gravel. I cried, but William told me he'd beat me up if I told on him. I could already tell today would probably be another day like the balloon day.

William stood up and walked over to the utility shed. He came back with a beat-up volleyball that he started throwing against the side of the house.

William sure frowns a lot lately. He's getting an up-and-down crease between his eyes. I wonder if William likes me at all anymore. I wonder if William will ditch me for a group of ugly boys.

"Hey, William," I called.

"What?" he snapped. He was standing there frowning. His face was flushed, and the glow of pink peeked out from under his mass of freckles, making his skin blend in with his shaggy, rust-colored hair. His eyes were fixed on me. He looked like a cartoon character, and he stood with his weight on his left leg, balancing the volleyball on his right hip.

"Are you friends with those boys that walked by?"

"Maybe."

I licked the sweat off my upper lip. "You better watch out. My mama said boys that walk around together yelling at people like that are no good--she says they're in a gang."

"Yeah, well, I can't say nothin' about no gangs."

"Why not?"

"I just can't say nothin' 'bout that. Nope, nothin'." He just stood there looking at me for a minute--then he started throwing the ball against the house again.

By this time I had watched enough soap operas and had enough experience with kids at school to know that if I acted uninterested, people would usually tell me what they said they weren't going to tell.

"Oh. OK. I'm gonna go inside and get some coke."

"Yeah. You wouldn't understand about all that gang stuff anyway. You're just a little kid." William was testing me.

"I don't care about it anyway. You probably don't even know nothin' anyway." I was fighting back this time. I was doubting him to his face. I hoped he couldn't see how nervous I was.

"Yes, I do, little girl." William walked over to the steps and stood there, still staring at me.

"I know more than you could ever dream of knowing," he said.

"Oh, yeah? How?"

"Man, you girls, you think it's all so simple. But it ain't. See, I joined a gang, and..."

I sat there looking at him. I rolled my eyes. Sweat was tickling the small of my back and the backs of my knees. I knew he was getting ready to tell me some kind of story.

"You know, I just wanted to fit in, to be part of a group. It just seemed like the thing to do, I was just bored with school and everything so it seemed like the thing to do. Plus, people like us--we got it extra hard 'cause we're *homeless*. We're shelter kids--we gotta try hard to fit in, 'cause we don't got what a lot of kids got. Gangs is a good way to fit in."

"Are you still in it?"

"Nope."

"Why not?"

"Well, see, I got tired of it. But they got a rule that says you can't get out once you're in, so I had to pretend to die."

"You had to do *what*?"

"Pretend to die. See, I was runnin' from 'em, and they shot at me, and the bullet hit me in the chest. Only, I had this blood pack on and it was full of fake

blood, and when they shot me it busted and I just laid there and they thought I was dead.”

“Well, didn’t they see you at school the next day?”

“Nope. This was last year, when I went to Lincoln. The next day my mama let me go to Lake Hills school.”

“Wow.” I was impressed. “Hey--don’t people in gangs do drugs? That’s what my third grade teacher told us last year.”

“Oh, yeah. I mean, you gotta at least try some stuff before they’ll let you in, you know, to see if you can hack it.”

“Drugs are bad. They kill you.”

“No they don’t, stupid. Not if you just do ‘em a few times.”

I sat there staring at the ground.

“Do you know anybody that’s died for real?”

“Yeah, I know a nine-year-old guy that got shot. He’s in the hospital right now, and they’re doing an autopsy.”

“What’s that?”

“It’s when they cut your body open and take out all your parts and look at ‘em to see if you had any drugs in you.”

“Did he?”

“Oh, yeah. See, he got shot because he didn’t ‘pay up’ to some guys for his drugs.”

“That was mean. Why didn’t they give him awhile to pay them back?”

“Cause they wanted the money *then*.”

“Well, my mama says sometimes if you owe somebody a lot of money they let you pay it back a little bit at a time, like the people at the bank.”

“This wasn’t no bank, dummy. Besides, he’d spend any money he got on drugs.”

“What drugs did he do?”

“Oh, everything. Crack and everything.”

“Didn’t his mama know?”

“No, she didn’t know nothin’ til he got killed.”

“Who shot him?”

“The people he owed the money to, idiot!”

“Oh.” I could tell I had aggravated William. I was tired of talking about drugs anyway. I wanted to play in the basement.

“Hey--you want to go exploring in the basement?”

“Nah. I’m tired of doin’ that.”

Silly boy! How can you get tired of going to the basement? I love to sneak into the dark, cool, basement. There are all kinds of old relics, like old newspapers and old boxes full of stuff, and building materi-

als like doors and window panes stacked against the walls. It’s the best place for an adventure. Plus, there’s this little room that we always go into--always acting like we’re just exploring--and when we get in it we pull down our pants and look at each other. Sometimes we take all our clothes off.

I have fantasies about going down there after school with Jeffrey Shuster and kissing. French kissing. And nobody knows we’re there, so we can kiss for hours. I usually think about this when I’m lying awake at night. It helps me get to sleep.

“You’re no fun anymore,” I said.

“Well, I just don’t want to play your stupid little games anymore.”

“Oh, come on. Please? Let’s go explore. I’ll let you be the good guy.”

William was silent for a minute or two. I could tell he was thinking real hard.

“OK. The only way I’ll play is if you be my slave.”

“What?”

“You have to be my slave and do anything I tell you to do. That’s the only way I’m gonna play. Take it or leave it.” He crossed his arms and cocked his head to the left side.

“It’ll be fun,” he said.

“Why do I have to be your slave?”

“Because I want you to. It’ll be fun. We can pretend that I’m Batman and you’re Robin--like, you’re my partner, but I get to tell you what to do.”

Since he’d brought up Batman and Robin, I relaxed a little. We always had fun playing Batman and Robin. Anyway, William always told me what to do and I usually did it--like going to get the football or asking permission from Miss Ann to watch her T.V. This time wouldn’t be any different. Plus, I like the colors in Robin’s costume better than Batman’s.

“Hey kids, lunch is ready,” called Miss Ann from the kitchen window.

“OK,” I said to William. “We’ll play it after lunch.”

“Yeah. Whatever.”

We both ran inside the back door into the kitchen. My mouth watered at the sight of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and potato chips on the table on paper plates. I would never get tired of peanut butter, even though William and I didn’t need any more jars (we had eight).

We wolfed down our sandwiches and chips.

“I hate milk,” said William. “I want some coke.”

"No, sir. You have to drink milk with your lunch. You can have coke with your snack this afternoon," said Miss Ann.

"That's stupid."

"You better watch that sassy mouth, young man, or I'll send you straight to your room for the afternoon."

I looked him straight in the eyes. I raised my eyebrows and gritted my teeth, reminding him of our game.

Just shut up and drink your milk. Why do you always have to argue? Why do you always have to be right? You're gonna mess up our day. Please just shut up for the rest of lunch.

William took three sips of his milk and got up from the table. I followed him.

"I'm sick of peanut butter," he said as we approached the back door.

Miss Ann pretended not to hear him. "William," she said sweetly, "on your way outside, would you please take this old crib mattress out to the dumpster?"

"OK," he said, and he carried the mattress out the back door. Then, instead of taking it to the trash, he threw it under the back steps and said, "I'll do it later. She pissed me off."

I want to tell you that you'll get in trouble if you don't do it now. I want to do it for you, so our afternoon doesn't get ruined. But I kind of admire the way you act so cool and tough and don't care, and it makes me wish I was cool, too.

We walked around to the side of the house and down the steps to the basement door. It was always unlocked. The latch was broken--Miss Ann had been saying for months that she was gonna get Mr. Jackson to come fix it.

We stepped inside onto the cool, concrete floor. There wasn't much light, except from three little windows. William walked straight into the little room. He turned around and told me to come on and I said we should at least pretend we're looking for the bad guys because Batman and Robin were always looking for bad guys. He said OK, we're looking for the Joker, so come on.

I followed him into the little room. There was one tiny window, half of which was covered with a board. I could barely see him.

"OK. Don't forget: you're my slave. You have to do what I say."

All I want to do is play pull-down pants, I thought. I don't know why I have to be a slave. Wil-

liam sure has gotten weird.

"OK. Pull your pants off."

"You have to, too," I said. By now my eyes were adjusting to the darkness, and I could see his outline and I could almost make out his facial features.

"No, I don't." William deepened his voice and said, "Do as I say, slave."

I don't like this, I thought. Why do I have to be so agreeable all the time? Why do I always have to be the one to give in?

I pulled down my pants and my panties. They dropped down around my ankles.

Batman moved closer to me and stood about two inches from me. He said, "You have to let me do this. Robin always has to let Batman do whatever he wants." The next thing I knew I was on the ground on my back.

"Ouch! That hurts!" I said.

William was sticking his finger somewhere I didn't even know I had, and it felt like he was cutting my flesh open with a razor.

I wish you would stop this. This doesn't make me get that throbbing feeling like when we look at each other or look at Playboys. This hurts.

I started crying. He still wouldn't stop, so I started screaming. He covered my mouth with his other hand. I hit him on the back and then I started punching at his face. He took his hand away from down there just long enough so he could grab my arms and pin them to the floor with his knees. Evil hand again.

Oh God this hurts. I'm gonna have to get surgery to get sewn back together.

William took out his finger and took his other hand off my mouth. I started to let out a scream, but he slapped me hard on the left cheek.

"You're a stupid girl. If you don't know how to play fair, then you shouldn't play at all. If you go and tell anybody about today, I'll get a gun and I'll kill you, I will. You're no fun at all. Sissy. Crybaby. Little bitch."

By this time, I could see William's face clearly, his crooked teeth, straight mouth, and a small nose that turned up slightly on the end. He was wearing that frown, and he had red splotches all over his face and neck.

"I'm not your friend anymore," I said. "I wish you would die or move away."

"Well, I don't care. You've never been my friend, so I wouldn't care if you jumped off a cliff today. You can't even play fair."

William stormed out of the little room and I heard the basement door shut.

That afternoon I stayed in my room and cried for a long time. My room was upstairs. Everybody else was either gone somewhere or downstairs, so nobody could even hear me wailing. I cried so loud it made my throat hurt, but nobody came to check on me. I don't know what I would've said if somebody had come up and asked what was wrong, because I figured William would stand true to his promise to kill me if I ratted.

I pulled out my black tape recorder--the one I got for my ninth birthday--and I rewound the tape that was in it. It was a tape of me pretending to be a disc jockey and doing commercials. I pushed record and play and sobbed into the microphone.

I hate you because you are meaner than anybody I know, I thought. You used to be my friend but now I hate you. You're the ugliest, meanest boy in the whole world. I wish you would die.

I woke up two hours later. I was still hurting. My hair was plastered to the right side of my face, and my neck was sweaty. I stood up and I had to pee. It burned bad when it came out, like when I had a bladder infection last year.

I went back to my room and shut the door. I was bored. I wanted someone to play with, but I wouldn't dare go downstairs. I pulled out the box of papers I had saved--old junk mail and receipts Mama or Miss Ann had let me have--and I played bank. I got tired of that, so then I made price tags out of torn-up notebook paper and put them on everything in the room. I pretended to talk to customers and to take their money. Then I pretended I was the cashier at the movies--all the movies were "R" rated, so I pretended to turn lots of children away. I even made a sign out of construction paper that said R RATED: NOBODY YOUNGER THAN 17 ALLOWED.

I had to pee again. I walked down the hall to the bathroom, but this time the door was locked.

"Hurry up, I gotta go!" I said.

"Shut up," William said from inside.

By now I didn't even care about what he'd done. Sure, I was still scared of him, but I also knew that I couldn't make it to the downstairs bathroom.

"Hurry! Hurry! Pleeceeeze! I really have to go bad!"

Silence. He is just trying to make me mad. Probably just standing at the door laughing. He wants me to pee in my pants.

Just then an explosion went off in the bathroom. It startled me so bad I almost peed.

"What're you doing in there? You better hurry, or I'll tell Miss Ann that you wouldn't let me in the bathroom!"

Miss Ann and my mama and William's mama all rushed up the stairs, like three sweet potatoes running a relay race. Mama had on her robe and her hair was in curlers, and William's mama was wiping her hands on her green polyester housedress. Miss Ann looked at me as she untied her dirty apron and laid it on the stair case. "What happened?" she said slowly, and when I just stood there, she yelled, "What was that noise?"

I am peeing now. I can't stop. It's running down my legs into my socks. My ears are still ringing from the explosion.

I started crying, half because I was scared of getting in trouble for peeing in my pants, and half because I was scared they thought I'd made that noise.

"I don't know," I said. "It came from William." I pointed to the Bathroom door. "It's locked. I was just waitin' to pee."

Miss Ann knocked on the door and said, "William? Honey? What are you doing in there?"

Silence. Oh he's doing it to them, too. He's not gonna let anybody in the bathroom all night. He just wants attention.

William's mother stuck the side of her head to the door. "William?" she called. "What are you playing with in there? Are you playing with a gun?"

Silence. Whatever that noise was, I thought, I hope he hurt himself real good. Maybe he died. Then we'd be rid of him. Meanie.

Miss Ann rushed back up the stairs with an icepick in hand, breathing fast and hard as she hurried to the bathroom door. She poked the icepick into the hole in the doorknob. She wiggled it from side to side and then she pushed the handle hard with the palm of her hand. The pick thrust into the lock and the door flew open.

William was lying stomach-down in a big pool of red. There was even red splattered on the wall. But I was only able to get a glimpse for a second or two; it's hard to get a good look at something when the huge, round hips and thighs of three grown-up women are blocking your view.

Mama turned and shoved me to the top of the stairway before I could see any more. Miss Ann started sobbing. William's mama just stood there staring at

him.

“Mama, William’s just fakin’ it. He’s done that before--you know, acted dead. He probably got a blood pack and busted it on top of his head so we’d think he died.”

Mama came over to me and put her arm around my shoulder, nudging me to go down the stairs. “No, honey, William is dead. He really did shoot himself in the head.”

I squirmed out of her reach and crossed my arms and pouted my lips, just like I’d seen my favorite soap opera actress do when she was in a fight with her boyfriend.

“I don’t believe you,” I said, “William’s too stupid to do something like that.” Besides, I thought, twelve-year-olds don’t kill themselves. The only people I ever hear of doing that are old people. I know he faked it all just so he could see me wet my pants.

“Go downstairs, honey, and take a bath and change clothes.”

“Mom, I’m *trying* to tell you it’s a joke!”

“Go downstairs NOW!” Mama screamed.

I was going to keep arguing, but by this time my legs were sticking together and my pee was starting to smell, so I gave in and went to get a bath.

As I ran my bathwater, I was thinking What if William really killed himself? Is it my fault for wishing it? Maybe so, but the world’s a better place without stupid people like him.

He deserved it. There wasn’t any good in that kid.

Now every time I hear about somebody killing themselves, I think how they must’ve done something bad to deserve it and that they know the world would be a much better place without them. Oh, I’ve forgiven William by now; but still the same, some things are just meant to be.

—Helen Chandler





Meathooks

Mister

I am a poet
with hands that don't work
A couple of cheap mutes I've got
no good broken bottles I blow on
No good they are shot
But the poet in me's bursting at the seams
steeped waist deep in thunder
my organs cramped in a capsule of complaints
My sharp bitter fruit of a tongue
knows its job to sting sting sting
See it's these two liars forsake me
unhandy hands that know the pattern
but won't sew
the thick skins of a poem
Meat that beats and splats
frying in animal fat
marking itself into music
It's as easy as that
and shouldn't a woman's hands know
these chores well enough
Not mine
So I've traced back mothers ago
to find the dug up root
a name for them
overlooked or misplaced
on a label in a pile of old clothes
No good
There's really only one thing left
they can do
Now I'm praying to you with my fat hands
for the name
that might ring a bell
Pour this poet out whole
Or Mister if you could give
the absolution of a perfect reader
to these 2
taciturn traitors
the lost romantic gesture
I kiss each

—Carolyn Hembree



Watercolor - 22.5" x 30"

Catherine Jones - *untitled*

Bluebeard Speaks Out at the Tavern
About Love

Well, I tell you, I was cursed from the beginning!
Look at my face, will you?
Oh yes it feels normal, sirs
It gets beer on it as usual beards do
and food and dirt and spit.
But it remains always
blue blue blue!
Like the sky and the ocean
and the occasional moon!
Ah yes. Horrid,
unnatural blue
for a beard I mean.

And the day they stabbed me through my side
(See my scars, sirs?)
No, no, here! the two above my hip!)
Well, I looked like the British flag!
Ah, you laugh, but it was ghastly!
I crawled out of the house like a crab
and
to the chemist
not a moment
to spare.

And
All I did, sirs
was give her the key!
I gave her money and clothing and sex sex sex
Why she begged like a lapdog!
(So shameful, that begging and begging!)
And I warned her I warned her of my room!
No crime in that, I'll say!
Why, the wretch disobeyed me!
I had a few
skeletons in the closet
but only a few, sirs, nothing to frown at, I tell you!
(What are you frowning at?)

And
Her brothers were mean
five of them
larger than houses! With ogre's teeth
and eyes like fire! Hair of lizard's tongues!

No woman worth all that, I'll say. No *no!*
I wonder what she's doing now probably
stealing some other man's
prized heart
which he thought he had locked away
for eternity
eternity!

And I tell you
(and I'd swear it on my cursed beard!)
even now she is turning this man's
key,
(Ha ha!)
as if she had that very heart
swinging on a chain like a ticking watch
a trinket for her box!

So now, gentlemen!
Are your ladies keeping all your hearts
in little forbidden
closets, cases,
little cupboards?
Cubbyholes?
Hmm?

Sirs,
I will now tell you the moral!
(I've made up a good
solid rhyme:
But you will see now how *I* am the begging mongrel!)

Please!
My good friends, do not marry or couple!
Women, my friends, are far too much trouble!
If then
we all sit and our faces still sneer, then
Wilhelm, good man!
Bring us all
one more beer!



Photograph - 8" x 10"

Brandon McIntosh - *Untitled*

Cool Cat Cafe

I don't call myself lonely
just because I like shadow dancing up
and down the length of my room
riding on the souls of dance hall junkies
like waves
Let me give you a rundown of the evening's events
at The Cool Cat Cafe

buhm buhm buh buh buhm
Un for get ta ble

Sweet Nat King Cole and my shadow balances its arms
and I'm a plane catching birds in my palms
as I take off
dizzy with love
light as a bubble on the surface of his voice
a *darling*
But burst climbing down radio static
supporting a sad sax
Lover Man my shadow building into a rainstorm on the wall
drenching the room too
lonely to give a damn about the rain
Billie Holiday deep down and real as an old woman
who can hardly remember her first kiss
lover man oh where can you be—————
and we end stretching out my back on the wall
arched as a taut bow
holding her last note until I break
into a slow tornado rolling my way down the room
touching down when I feel like it
Cry Me a River with Ella's sweet croon
over the big bass some fat man slapping that thing
and Ella's sending a telegram
splitting the clouds like a missile
from me to you
daddy go 'head
and the end of the song starts
swinging
the rain's beating
against my door like a heartbeat
and I'm getting tired of this poem
I might just have to get up and groove
start some shadow dancing
even if people might think I'm lonely
if my pillow could talk imagine all that it would say
what they don't know is
I'm slow jazzing my way to heaven



Photograph - 9.125" x 7.25"

Catherine Brown - *Too Many Pills*

Intentional Ice Skating

Gliding languidly passed
the inching pace
kept by my mechanical steps,
he becomes calligraphy,
swirling in continental circles.
The vibrant sheet dulls.
Glints and flashes pulse:
butter pats in a warming skillet.

My two nail files drag
through a sand box.
The teetered dance
molts into amusement.

He speeds away, giggling silently.
Small flakes on navy mittens are
my licked fingers in the sugar jar.

—Danny Milner



line etching - 8.825" x 11.75"

Catherine Jones - *untitled*

ten o'clock news

and the shades close on the scene
and the shades close on the scene
the mother looks down "such a tragedy"
the neighbors say as they
look away with whispering "well, I never!"
imposing with your
problems?
Look! You can't turn away!
horrid scene bloody with
holy righteousness
"close the shades, please"

—Jennifer Kelly

I found half-colored coloring books.
I sought out the fairy tales whose endings
were past my bedtime.
I nursed back to use dolls that had been
carelessly abandoned.
I took these ruins, and I built a tiny fortress
of my childhood.
And, this time, I did not leave until I wanted to.

—Peggy Fackliss



Photograph - 4" x 6"

Thomas Diasio - *untitled*

Gretel

Once upon a time there lived a heroine who was neither very beautiful nor perfectly mannered. Although it was golden hair that filled the pages of the fairy tales read to her as a child, Gretel's hair was steel grey. Instead of having the snow-white skin of the fairy tale princesses she had so loved, Gretel's complexion was rather sallow, almost olive. Her face was a good face, interesting, but not beautiful. Her skin, once sun-kissed and sprinkled with little reddish freckles, was now deeply lined and covered with brown liver spots. The full rosebud lips that, in her dreams, had kissed a thousand princes, were now rather thin and cracked.

"Welcome to Sunnyvale, Mrs. Grimm," the vivacious nurse chirped. "I know that you'll love your new home."

"This," Gretel sneered, wiping dust from an aging statue, "This will never be home."

"Well, I certainly hope that that attitude wears off. Thinking that way only makes things worse for everyone involved. Believe me."

"Why did you choose to come to stay at Sunnyvale, by the way?" Lily continued, leading Gretel down a plushly carpeted hallway.

"Well, it wasn't my choice, that's for sure. My children don't want to look after me anymore. Even my grandchildren have lives of their own. You know?"

Upon reaching the open door at the end of the long hallway, Gretel's tension began to ease. The room had a big picture window along one wall which looked out onto an enormous fountain in the center of a pebbled courtyard. Adorning the fountain, a stony family of ducks issued water from their petrified skyward bills. From the comfortable looking window seat which seemed perfect for reading, Gretel could see the forest looming in the distance. Smiling, Gretel had to admit that the room was pretty nice. She grudgingly began to realize that maybe this wasn't going to be so bad after all. Even the little details like the bou-

quet of fresh flowers on the nightstand beside her bed were attended to. In fact, it was almost like her own room at home. The cherry wood bed with delicately carved legs was just the kind she liked, and it even had a down comforter, like the one she and Jacob had used, thrown over the patchwork quilt to keep the chill out of the room.

Later, in the solitude of her new bedroom, Gretel thought about how much she missed Jacob. If only he'd been able to hang on for just a few more months, then maybe she would have been ready to go too. But now, without him, the empty room echoed her quiet sobs and only magnified her loneliness.

Sleep somehow eluded Gretel that night. She longed to roll over and see Jacob there beside her, clasping the corner of his flannel pillow in his fist like a little child fighting off a bad dream. Frightened of this strange new bed, Gretel finally, shamefully, pulled out the security that she needed to sleep, a battered cornflower blue volume of fairy tales that Jacob had given her for her twentieth birthday. Opening the gilt-edged book to the elaborate frontispiece, she slid her finger longingly over the faded inscription that Jacob had written so long ago. She sat up half the night, rereading the tales that had been her only companion for so many months.

After having fallen asleep while reading about the fantastic world of Jacob's stories, the reality of the next morning was an unwelcome sight to Gretel. Throwing on her pink terrycloth robe and fuzzy house shoes, she padded down the hallway and out into the commons to grab a cup of coffee. Filmy shafts of sunlight found their way from the bay window to the polished hardwood floors through a tangle of honeysuckle vines, and the laughter of the visiting children beyond was infectious.

After dressing for the day, Gretel nestled herself in the corner of the cushioned windowseat. Resting

her cheek against the pane of glass, she pulled a smooth, shiny object from her shirt pocket and rested the heavy, glittering memento in her palm. A knock on the door interrupted her reverie.

"Oh, why that's a lovely pocket watch, Mrs. Grimm. Is that yours?" asked Lily, opening the bottom half of the creaky Dutch door.

"No, silly girl. Women don't carry pocket watches. Nobody does anymore, but men used to. This one belongs to... belonged to my husband," sighed Gretel, correcting herself.

"Well, it's very nice," said the nurse, handing Gretel two flimsy white paper cups. "You have a nice day, now, Mrs. . . ."

"My husband, he was a famous writer you know," Gretel interrupted. "Maybe you've heard of some of his..."

"Yes, well, I'm sorry that I can't stay and chat with you, but it's nearly noon and I've got to get everyone's medicine handed out in time," said the nurse, heading towards the door.

"You have a nice day, now, Mrs. Grimm."

As soon as Lily had rolled away her squeaky medicine cart, Gretel focused her attention on the gold watch once more. She'd always loved the engraving of the little girl and boy, holding hands in front of the great forest that was etched on the watch's cover. After all, the watch had been her wedding present to Jacob and if she placed it against her cheek and closed her eyes, she could almost imagine that she had her head on Jacob's chest again.

Flipping the ticking watch over and over in her hand with her thumb, Gretel's mind began to wander.

As a young girl in Vienna, Gretel was the only daughter of a poor woodcutter. Together with Gretel's mother, Rosa, the little family barely scratched out a living. Gretel was coddled and cared for by her adoring mother, but because she was often absent-minded and daydreamed about the fairy tales that her mother would wistfully read to her, Gretel was not a favorite of her practical, miserly father. It was precisely because of these fairy tales that tension often arose between her parents. Whenever problems would arise at home, Gretel would retreat into the forest. When she'd journeyed to the deepest part of the wood she would sit under her favorite oak tree and dream of how such adversities would make her a better heroine. In her sadness, Gretel was simply more beautiful to any adoring princes who might be watching her close by.

Still lost in her daydream, Gretel threw open the shutters of her picture window to let in the fresh air.

Franz, the orphaned cat who wandered around Sunnysvale caring the scraps of bread meant for the birds, hopped up onto the sill, hungry for attention.

"You see, Franz," Gretel explained to the obese calico, "when I was a little girl I always imagined that I was so important that someone was always watching me, waiting at the edge of the woods. But times have changed. People around here, they treat me just like a nobody," Gretel said sadly. "Don't these people know I've got stories to tell?"

"Come sit on my lap, darling," said Gretel, patting her lap. "Yes, that's a good boy. You see, I've always wanted to do something big, to be somebody interesting. Jacob gave me that chance. Jacob made me immortal."

Gretel thought about the day she had stumbled upon Jacob in the forest. At sixteen, her silly daydreams had caused her to wander out too far and, as night was falling, she forgot the way back home. All at once, Jacob galloped up on his midnight steed and asked her if he could assist her. She stayed with him for dinner that night, and afterwards, as he gallantly took her back to her cottage, he told her

about a little trick she could use to keep from losing her way the next time she came for a visit.

As time passed, Gretel found herself near Jacob's house more and more often. She was drawn to his vivid imagination and, during the coldest winter nights, they would sit on his bearskin rug in front of the fire and tell each other stories that ended happily ever after.

However, many of Gretel's favorite stories were about the orphaned animals that Jacob had rescued from the forest. His cottage, a shelter of sorts, was filled with white mice who had lost their tails, frogs that had been discarded from the rough hands of little boys, and even a wolf he had found caught in a hunter's steel trap. Gretel and Jacob would laugh for hours about the things they thought the frog prince or the grandmotherly wolf would say if only they had voices.

In the months and years that followed, Gretel came to think of Jacob's little cottage as her own and the two of them as one and the same. Some nights, sitting there in the hazy glow of the firelight with Jacob, Gretel would sometimes forget that she was not alone. Although she occasionally took Jacob's presence for granted, when he went away she would touch the things that he had touched, hoping that a small part of him would remain there on her fingertips.

"Grammy," two little voices whispered in unison, jolting Gretel back to the present. "We came for a

visit, Granny” said Hannah and Joseph, poking their heads above the bottom half of the Dutch door so that only their eyes and foreheads showed.

“Oh, my little angels!” Gretel exclaimed, hugging the children as tightly as she could. “Granny is so glad to see the two of you. What a wonderful surprise!”

“What a pretty new dress you have, Hannah,” Gretel remarked, fussing with a piece of white eyelet around the collar.

“And look how you’ve grown, Joseph. Why, you’d think I hadn’t seen you in months!” said Gretel, jutting out her chin with pride.

“What a pretty kitty-cat,” said Hannah, reaching out to Franz with sticky fingers.

“Who cares about some dumb old cat? I want to hear a story, Granny,” Joseph whined, putting both hands on his hips.

After sitting transfixed through all of “Sleeping Beauty” and “Thumbelina,” the children began to fall asleep towards the end of their Grandma’s favorite.

“All their worries were over,” Gretel continued, in spite of the slumbering children at her feet, “and they lived together in pure happiness.”

Closing the big volume of fairy tales, Gretel returned her attention to the purring feline on her lap.

“Have you ever heard that story, Franz? Well, that’s my story. Jacob wrote it for me. He thought of me as a hero,” she whispered.

“I only wish that other people thought I was that important. Oh, I see the looks on their faces when I tell them my stories. They just think I’m some old nut,” Gretel sighed.

Franz, looking up at Gretel sympathetically, stretched and yawned, turning around twice on Gretel’s thin, shaky knees before snuggling down again to hear the rest of her story.

“Franz, you three are the only ones who seem to understand me at all,” Gretel said, smoothing a stray chestnut curl that had fallen in Hannah’s thick lashes.

“You are the only ones that I can trust with my secrets and dreams,” she sighed, depositing the sleeping children on her bed.

Later, after the children had awakened from their naps and shared their lunches with Franz, they remembered that it was time for their mother to pick them up.

“Mommy, Mommy,” they squealed, seeing their mother’s car turning into the parking lot.

Upon entering the building the children’s mother

was greeted by Gretel’s nurse, Lily. Noticing how worried she looked, Eliza became alarmed.

“Mrs. Foster, can Dr. Carmicheal speak with you for a moment, please?” the nurse asked, leading the children’s mother into the doctor’s office.

“Sure. Go play with your great-Grandma some more kids,” she said, motioning to the two wiggling children whose lips were stained red with Kool-Aid.

“Have a seat, Mrs. Foster” Dr. Carmicheal said, motioning to a burgundy leather armchair in the corner. “Let me get right to the point with you Mrs. Foster.

We believe your grandmother has a delusional disorder. It’s one of the behavior excesses common to people with schizophrenia.”

“Schizophrenia?” asked Mrs. Foster, obviously shaken. “Aren’t those the people with all those different personalities?”

“No, actually schizophrenia consists of a group of psychotic disorders characterized by major cognitive, behavioral, and emotional disturbances. I’m not saying that your grandmother has schizophrenia, Mrs. Foster,” Dr. Carmicheal said gently. “Delusional disorders are merely misrepresentations of reality. Nearly 50% of schizophrenics have such delusions, but your grandmother isn’t one of them.”

“Thank God,” said Mrs. Foster, breathing a sigh of relief. “But what brought about your diagnosis, doctor?”

“Well, although she functions adequately otherwise, Nurse Watts has noticed that she seems to have a prominent, systematized delusion. For some the delusions consist of the feeling that others are constantly watching them; others have grandiose delusions and believe that they are extremely important movie stars or presidents.”

“But Grandma?” interrupted Mrs. Foster impatiently.

“Well, it seems that your grandmother believes that her husband was Jacob Grimm, the fairy tale author. She’s even been telling the other residents that he wrote ‘Hansel and Gretel’ just for her.”

“What?” Mrs. Foster laughed. “I don’t know what she’s told you, but my grandma grew up in Los Angeles with a picture-perfect German father and a flighty mother who ran away to New York to be a writer.”

“Well, I guess Mrs. Grimms’ mother’s occupation explains her love of storytelling,” he chuckled. “According to the early psychologists, your grandmother’s home life makes perfect sense. You see,

it was once believed that the main etiology, or cause, of the disorder was a communication problem between mother and child,” said Dr. Carmichael, leaning back in his swivel chair.

“That’s interesting,” said Mrs. Foster. “But it is a little disturbing that Grandpa only died a few months ago and she’s already forgetting his name and making up stories about him.”

“Well, that’s part of the reason I wanted to talk to you. She seems to still be suffering from depression,” said Dr. Carmichael, adjusting his glasses. “The onset for this delusional disorder is often immediately after a period of trauma like death or childbirth. The most common and effective method of treatment for this disorder would simply be to provide your grandmother with a strong social network. Being around the children is probably one of the best things for her,” he concluded, rising from his chair.

After stealing some of the glistening change from the murky waters of the fountain, the happy threesome, Gretel, Hannah, and Joseph, escaped into the forest behind Sunnyvale.

“Oh great-grandma, I wish I had exciting stories to tell like you do,” Hannah wistfully sighed.

Gretel smiled knowingly and patted her softly on the cheek that was rosy and firm like a ripe peach, ready to roll off its heavy branch.

“This looks like a good spot,” Joseph noted, pointing to a massive oak tree whose limbs were draped with wisteria vines.

“So it does,” said Gretel, spreading out her patchwork quilt under the tree’s thick boughs.

It was soon Gretel’s turn to nap. The children, quickly tired of tickling their grandmother’s nose with a feather they had found, ran off to play. As their game of hide and seek led them farther and farther from Gretel, the daylight dwindled and they realized that they were lost.

“Oh Joseph, what should we do?” cried Hannah.

“Stop whining, Hannah. I’ll think of something.”

Remembering a trick from one of the fairy tales, Hannah shimmied up a tree to see if she could find the rooftop of Sunnyvale.

“Joseph, Grandma is so smart,” said Hannah excitedly. “There’s something shiny on the ground and I think it’s those pennies that we stole from the fountain. We have a way home now. Just like in the story,” said Hannah, shimmying back down again.

With that, the children skipped gingerly back to the home, stopping only to pick up an occasional penny along the way. In their excitement to get back to their mother, they skipped right past the big oak tree with the wisteria vines. Gretel was no longer sleeping on the quilt, but the big cornflower blue volume of fairy tales was still turned to the pages of “Hansel and Gretel.” Serving as a kind of bookmark, Gretel’s beautiful pocket watch lay open, revealing the lovely, mother of pearl face that had ceased its ticking.

—Adrianne Simon



Photograph - 9.25" x 7.25"

Catherine Brown- *Before, During & After Chemo*

Opus I

Headlights drift across vinyl siding
At his destination he leaves
paper and deadlines with his '78 Buick
Inside he feels music

From the lyre of the angels
come sounds so sweet
They cascade down on pure flesh
he crescendos up the stairs

There he sees his reasons for
racing home every evening
one in a blanket of blue
the other in a cheap polyester skirt

Is it the lack of perfection
that makes this a masterpiece
The moon's first light dances on her
bare breast and his son's chubby arms

Instruments provided by the great composer
Rhythm kept by the rocking chair
an open windowed audience
duet by mother and child

—Chris Lasseter

we hate and are each other

why did we rain and swallow
(fantly speaking swaying willow
trees depress like pale faceless
faces)

why did we clasp our numb hands
together (swimming fishes are
healing themselves with switchblade
crucifixes)

why did we sob and whisper
in ears

words we knew were worn out at the knees and
in the seat

(we ascended from sheets with loathing;
we hate and are each other)

coldness visits us—the
chill

of something we named love
believing we patented the emotion

—Leslie Nuby



Photograph - 8" x 10"

Brandon McIntosh- *Evnsion*

We lay,
sculpted together,
molded by artist's hands,
Smooth, supple
willing to harden as one
frozen in time.
Animal pacified by a beauty
envied by Heaven and honeysuckle sweet.
An eternity for one more minute.
Don't let go just yet...

—J.T. Emis

Agarella

Author's Note: "Agar" (pronounced "ah-ger") is the jello-like substance used in millions of labs worldwide to culture various forms of microbes. It's used primarily in flat, round petri dishes or in glass test tubes. There are hundreds of different types of agar and most denote their ingredients by their names.

Once upon a time at a well-respected research center on a university campus, there studied a brilliant microbiology student named Anna. Anna continually astonished the biology department with her innovative experiments and the elegant yet concise and explanatory language of her lab reports. Naturally, she was one of her professors' favorite students and she consistently made the highest grades in her class. Her senior professor, Dr. Rhizobium, saw her as the one person who would carry on the tradition of eloquent scientific writing and go even further inside of single-celled organisms than he had.

In Fact, Anna and Dr. Rhizobium had been working on some earth-shattering research with an organism known as Zoglea ramigera. Although well known for its role in the secondary stage of sewage treatment, Anna and Dr. Rhizobium envisioned a much greater destiny for the little bacteria (Tortora et al 690). Anna and Dr. Rhizobium planned on using Zooglea ramigera and its gelatin-forming abilities to invent a new type of environmentally-friendly rubber cement.

Anna and Dr. Rhizobium worked feverishly in the lab, and both of them spent most of their spare time there. One Saturday, while Anna was preparing a flask of blood agar to be autoclaved, Dr. Rhizobium went to the copy room to xerox copies of the preliminary procedures of the experiment. (Author's Note: The autoclave is the instrument used in millions of labs and medical facilities worldwide to sterilize glassware, agar, and anything else that needs to be decontaminated.) Inadvertently, he happened to interrupt a covert and informal business meeting being held in the copy room. Dr. Chlamydia and Dr. Shigella were conferring over something quite passionately and did not notice Dr. Rhizobium.

"Blast it all, Shigella! Now what are we going to do? The CIA knows that someone in this area of the country has been selling to Iceland incredibly detailed genetic information on all of the germ warfare bugs the U. S. has developed!!"

"Frankly, Chlammeister, I don't see why your Hanes are in such a wad! How is anyone going to find out the genetic maps are coming from us? There are at least five other places they'll have to check before they suspect us. By that time you and I will be safely tucked away in our fully furnished, Western-style homes on the lovely and remote southern part of Thailand, drinking beer and slurping down oysters! It just doesn't get any better than that."

Before Shigella's criminal cohort could add a rejoinder, they both looked up and noticed Dr. Rhizobium, who appropriately suspected that Chlamydia and Shigella were as ruthless as they were greedy. They both jumped to grab Dr. Rhizobium, but he slipped away from them and ran down the hall screaming, "Biological espionage!! Biological espionage!!!" at the top of his lungs. Chlamydia and Shigella followed hard on his heels. They ran past the secretary's office, the genetics lab, the chemical supply closet, and finally chased Rhizobium into his own microbiology lab.

Rhizobium, Shigella and Chlamydia jumped over tables, ran around incubators and crawled under sinks. They tossed chairs and threw reagents. A bottle of crystal violet dye hit the wall and shattered, leaving a brilliant blackish purple stain to find its way to the floor. They finally had him. Dr. Rhizobium was cornered by the multi-unit constant motion incubator.

"So now you're in on our little secret," Shigella said menacingly as he shoved Dr. Rhizobium up against the wall.

"Don't you try to intimidate me!" Rhizobium was outraged. "You'll be sorry you sold out. We don't even have germ warfare research here."

"How naive you are for a Novel prize-winner, Dr. Rhizobium. Obviously, you are even more of an optimistic dunce than I once perceived you to be." By

this time Shigella was in his face and Chlamydia made his comments with the faint imprint of a smile on his face. "I don't think you'll be able to make your tenure meeting on Friday. We want to test out one of the latest germ warfare techniques on a human vector. Don't you just love the exhilaration of discovery?"

"Haachechoo!" A sneeze blasted across the room. Shigella, Chlamydia, and Rhizobium all jumped in surprise. Their eyes all turned toward the walk-in closet in the back. Shigella shoved Dr. Rhizobium to the wall even more violently than before, while Chlamydia walked slowly to the closet. There beside the HB 922iJ3 JiffyDecimate autoclave, crouched Anna, suffering from an untimely post-nasal drip. Her tall figure was squished into a concealed corner but her bobbed auburn hair was easily visible. Chlamydia walked slowly to the autoclave and stood directly before her.

"You're insane if you think you can get away with this!" Anna leapt from her spot on the floor and tackled Chlamydia. Chlamydia got away and grabbed a glass beaker, broke it on the black counter, and ran towards Anna with it. She, like her mentor was cornered.

"Let's give these two a tour of our germ warfare lab. I don't think either of them have ever seen it," said Shigella, his eyes glinting with glee at this prospect of a new experiment.

"Both of you are sick. What kind of scientists do think you are? Selling out the government that gave you the grants to do research with in the first place--that's despicable!" Anna was ticked off, to say the least.

"My dear," said Chlamydia in his typically patronizing way, "finding the more effective biological warfare with genetics is perfectly logical and it's perfectly logical to sell them to the highest bidder--not the idiot who gives us the best insurance coverage."

Shigella and Chlamydia hustled Anna and Dr. Rhizobium through the first floor hallway and down to the basement. As they entered the lab, Anna noticed that it was equipped with the best of everything, even by university standards. All of the instruments were digital and computer-driven. Every possible stain and reagent were lined up on long shelves like strands of multi-colored jewels on the back wall. They even had a state-of-the-art electron microscope.

"Well someone has obviously been subsidizing your efforts". Anna was envious as she perused the well-stocked lab.

"Yes, Uncle Sam will do anything in the name of science and warfare," Chlamydia remarked mildly. "For

the Nobel-prize winner, we will demonstrate our best efforts. An elegant organism that is rare in this country, Gonnabi meahonda. I'm sure you're familiar with it. Fatality is practically 100% assured. We've altered the genes to ensure that death of the victim from encephalitis occurs within 3 to 5 minutes of the ingestion of the amoeba from the nasal mucosa" (Tortora et al 554).

"I suppose," pondered Anna, "that that particular species of would be an effective warfare agent to lace ponds and streams with it since it is a typically water-born organism. . . ."

"Anna, I can't believe you!! They're sitting here about to kill me and you're pondering effective distribution routes for the bacteria they're planning to use?"

"Well, it takes my mind off of the situation," bristled Anna defensively. Besides, she thought, we might be able to buy some time. Anna's logic had never been more wrong.

"Quit this squabbling," commanded Chlamydia, "Anna does show herself to be much more perceptive than you sit." With that, he sprayed a fine mist up Dr. Rhizobium's nose. Dr. Rhizobium doubled over and grabbed his head and fell on the floor. First, he turned an incredible shade of navy blue. This was followed by a series of convulsions during which Dr. Rhizobium sang the "Three's Company" theme song in its entirety. Then Dr. Rhizobium's body froze completely. He was dead. Although inwardly Anna was mortified, she allowed no emotion to escape in her expression.

"So you plan to murder everyone who gets in your way? How efficient. It is a sad waste of some fine specimens of bacteria though."

"You will be very impressed with our latest warfare bacteria--Cinderellosis passivum," gloated Shigella. "We haven't tried it out yet, but I know you'll be more than happy to help us work out the kinks!" He injected Anna's hip with a dark grey fluid before she could say another word. See Figure 6. The effects of the bacteria were almost instantaneous.

"What have you done to me...Oh no! what's happening! My feet are shrinking! Good heavens I'm shrinking! My hair...What've you done to my hair, it's HUGE and blonde!! Where're my jeans? What is this thing?! A ballgown?!! What are you doing to me?!"

Shigella and Chlamydia laughed and danced around the room. "It's working! It's working! Now if only the brain effects will kick in!!" They both abruptly ceased their dancing and observed Anna with great interest.

Suddenly, Anna felt something shut down in her brain. All of her knowledge of science had somehow been enclosed except for the very small portion necessary to make agar. All of her years of hard work were trapped in some mental prison. She could not voice any reasoning skills at all. Only her emotions, her ability to make agar and a sudden, uncontrollable urge to go out and buy a Roll-O-Matic sponge mop were left accessible.

She looked in the mirror behind the door. She saw a petite blonde woman in a huge purple ballgown and glass slippers with a soft, beehive hairstyle. And to top it all off, she was wearing a golden crown. She nearly fainted.

"Heaven have mercy on me," she whispered, "I'm a fairy tale heroine!" And with that Shigella and Chlamydia roared with hideous laughter.

Shigella and Chlamydia wiped the tears of laughter from their eyes as they explained their twisted reasoning to the devastated Anna. By turning her into a fairy tale heroine, they effectively silenced the logical thoughts that were once the hallmark of Anna's scientific research.

"You can tell people about us, but who'll believe some blonde chic in a ballgown!" Shigella giggled. "The beauty of it all amazes me!"

Anna had to find some way to retrieve her ability to communicate logically and reasonably--but she couldn't even remember her own name. Somehow, she had to avenge Dr. Rhizobium's senseless death at the hands of these madmen.

Anna stumbled blindly out of the lab, not knowing what to do. She felt like crying. She sensed intuitively that she needed to stay in this place, to be here, but all of her scientific skills were gone except for the very basic ability to make agar. She wandered around the building in a daze, wondering what they did in the genetics lab and what exactly was the chemical supply closet, anyway?

"Excuse me, ma'am, but do you need some help?" A young woman with vehemently-lacquered hair and a stained white coat approached her. If Anna told the girl what had happened, the girl might not believe her or she would end up becoming Snow White. "I couldn't bear that to happen to anyone, much less this nice girl with big hair," thought Anna and shuddered.

"I was wondering if there were any openings around here for a human relations specialist," Anna said, trying to make the most of her new intuitive and emotional skills.

I'm afraid you're out of luck--the only opening

we have is for a TA whose primary job would be to clean glassware and make agar."

"That's perfect!" exclaimed Anna. This way, she would be able to stay and keep tabs on Chlamydia and Shigella hopefully figure out a way to repay them for their lousy deeds.

She was so absorbed in her own thoughts that she didn't notice that the girl was speaking to her.

"What did you say your name was, ma'am?"

Anna froze. She couldn't remember her name. All that she could think of was agar.

"Agar."

"I'm sorry, what did you say ma'am?"

"Agar."

The girl with big hair paused. She was politely irritated and began to methodically smooth down the hair behind her ears. "Your name is agar?"

"Agar. . .hell!" Anna swore, trying to think of her name.

"Agarella!" cried the girl. "What a great gimmick! I guess you've made agar before, right? Wow. I wish I could think up some name to help me land a job. Somehow "Bacteriella" just doesn't sound the same. . . ." She rambled on about something Anna could no longer understand.

Anna sighed and accepted her fate for the moment to be a dish-washing, professional agar-making fairy tale heroine. How unfortunate. She would have to do it, though. She had no choice. She was Agarella.

Agarella spent her days up to her elbows in agar, surrounded by petri dishes and sweaty from having to run the autoclave so much. She became legendary for her agar. All of it was professional-quality: evenly mixed, the right consistency, and the perfect amount in every petri dish and test tube. Everyone in the lab always told her that she should go into business for herself. Agarella made all different kinds of agar: soy agar, blood agar, tomato agar, chocolate agar, and milk agar.

Agarella spent every waking hour when she wasn't making agar trying to tap into the logical mind she still possessed. She tried her hardest, but as soon as she would get a coherent, logical thought in her mind, another thought about the need for a more effective grout cleaner or a handsome prince would creep through her mind and all would be lost. Those jerks would pay for what they had done.

Shigella and Chlamydia appeared unconcerned, however. One of their favorite pastimes, aside from creating new and more deadly forms of germ warfare, was to torture Agarella. Shigella was the worst.

"What's the bacteria in your intestine? What, you don't know? Sweetie, every first-grader knows it's E.coli."

One day, they drove Agarella too close to the edge. Both Shigella and Chlamydia had been drilling Agarella about the breakdown of glucose in the body and had even gone so far as to give her a copy of the pathway of reactions, but it was all Greek to Agarella. She threw the paper in their faces and then dumped a flask of boiling-hot blood agar on their laps.

"You little witch!" they screamed in unison. They both ran to the men's restroom, hurling invectives to all those they passed. Agarella sat down and cried. Now she had done it. Shigella and Chlamydia would surely come after her and no one would ever know what had happened to Dr. Rhizobium or to Anna. Suddenly, she felt someone tapping her shoulder.

"Hey there, it's not like it's the Irish potato blight or anything!" A tall man with a shiny, bald head and moccasins on his feet was standing behind her. He had on a lab coat that was stained and well-used and for some reason, he kept cracking jokes about fungus.

"Who are you?" Agarella was puzzled.

"I'm your Fairy God Scientific Professional! Just call me E. G." He smiled and looked around the lab. "Whoa, this is a nice set-up!"

"I wouldn't know--I just make the agar." Agarella was despondent.

"I know who you really are, thought, Anna."

Agarella was speechless. Something clicked inside her brain at the name "Anna." Could it be? Was it true? "You've got to help me think logically again so I can nail Shigella and Chlamydia! Please help me, E. G.!"

"No problem." He went around the lab gathering up all of his necessary items like a whirling dervish. In a matter of minutes, he had made six different strains of bacteria colonize the entire surface of their petri dishes. The bunsen burners puffed into high gear. The centrifuge whirled like it was about to come spinning off.

Finally, he seemed to have gotten all of the things that he needed. He scraped a little portion of all six bacterial strains onto an inoculating wand and with that, he inoculated the skin on the back of Agarella's hand.

Agarella felt something at her feet. She looked down and her feet had grown out of the painful glass slippers without the slightest cut. She was no longer in a cumbersome ballgown, but in her favorite jeans. Agarella's hair came back to its original length and she

threw off that stupid crown. But something was wrong.

"Wait, I still have the urge to go grab a mop and clean out the fireplace, while waiting for some prince to drop by! Oh no! I'll never be able to think straight!"

"Nonsense!" E. G. grabbed one of the low-flaming bunsen burners and ran the flame back and forth across the scratch that he had made on Agarella's hand. At that moment, Agarella felt something break inside of her mind. All of the immense quantity of knowledge that she had acquired came flooding back with a force so powerful that it almost knocked her down.

"Oh wow! I'm Anna again!" Upon her self-realization, something jumped off of Anna's hand. "Look on the floor, E. G.!"

There on the floor crouched a tiny, pulsating silver speck. "It must be the bacteria they injected me with."

"Just fascinating! It needs to be destroyed, though." E. G. was thinkin ahead. However, just as soon as the words escaped his mouth, they saw the silvery blob jump, turn green, and jump again. This time, the green blob hopped around on the floor, growing and flashing from some unseen light source.

"Wow! Just look at that thing mutate!" Both Anna and E. G. were at a loss for words. Finally, in one blinding flash of magenta light, all of the commotion stopped.

The explosion had been powerful enough to knock Anna and E. G. flat on their backs. Whey they came to, they were shocked at what they saw. In the middle of the floor sat a confused and dazed Dr. Rhizobium.

"Good heavens! How did that happen? I didn't plan that!" E. G. was thoroughly confused. Anna, however, had it all figured out. See Illustration 9Z.

"When they roughed us up, they must have contaminated my skin with some skin cells of Dr. Rhizobium. Those contaminated cells of mine got mixed in with the bacteria and through genetic fusion merged. When you removed the bacteria from its initial host, me, you caused it to start mutating at such a rate that all of the bacterial genes were overcome and Dr. Rhizobium is the end result of the mutation!"

"Wonderful! Brilliant! We're both normal again!" Dr. Rhizobium looked relieved. Just then, Shigella and Chlamydia walked back into the lab. When they saw Anna, Dr. Rhizobium, and E. G. standing there, they ran for it. Anna, Dr. Rhizobium, and E. G. chased after them, but lost the two around the student center. The following week, police found Shigella and Chlamydia hiding out in the men's restroom of the Burnished

Steer Steakhouse in Hoboken, New Jersey.

After Anna's and Dr. Rhizobium's testimonies, Shigella and Chlamydia were put away for life. In prison, they were forced to host a talk show three times a week and invite their fellow inmates to be the audience.

Dr. Rhizobium and Anna continued their research with Zooglea ramigera and patented an environmentally-friendly form of rubber cement. Through their hard work and sacrifice, Anna and Dr. Rhizobium became the toast of first-graders everywhere.

Anna eventually got her Ph.D in microbiology and went on to win a Nobel prize in biology for her work with one incredible instance of mutation shown by the species Cinderellois passivum. See Figures 10 A, B, and C.

WORKS CITED

Anna, The. Megamutation and You. New York: Nobel P, 1994.

Chlamydia, Chuck. The Grimm Reality of Biological Warfare. New York: STD P, 1993.

Tortora, Gerard J., Berdell R. Funke, and Christine L. Case. Microbiology: An Introduction. New York: The Benjamin\Cummings P Co, Inc., 1992.

—Julie Dykes

Edward Hopper's *New York Movie*, 8:45 P.M

As the 'thirties lens closes up
somehow this theatre stays open
and the usher leads them all
with a tiny light in her steady hand to
This Week! Katherine Hepburn and Jimmy Stewart!
Every night there are new scenes
in the aisles
and she's seen them all
a hundred times

i.
An older woman winces at her
then at her husband
Oh Darling, wouldn't it be better down there?
She paws at the fox that hangs from her neck
its little glass eyes looking down her dress
No, I rather like this spot myself; Dear: Yes, I rather like it.
He sniffs confidently
Oh, you're so stubborn. He's just so stubborn. Can you believe him?
He gives the usher a smile, winks
The woman looks surprised, jerks her head to the side
Hmph. Well, alright then we'll just take this one, I suppose.
Oh, and where can I leave my hat?

ii.
A young woman freshly powdered
gives her a quick smile, then turns to scope the audience
No thanks, Sweetie, I can see him from here...
Her hand flaps fast at him like a pigeon's wing
Hey,
Char-lee!
Her feathered hat
waves at everyone as she bounces past them
He greets her a little
as she takes off her fur he bought her
for her
anniversary
hangs it like the flag of some strange country
on the back of her chair
and drops in her seat like a bomb.

The usher finds herself against the wall now
until the intermission
feels a little silly seeing this picture so many times
especially that kiss
she hates this part
knows what the audience is thinking
or doing in the grey light of this halted time
she wonders if her boyfriend
will ever kiss her
the way Jimmy Stewart kisses Katherine Hepburn

every night
in the Philadelphia Story
doubts it.

She led a tall older man in
earlier
He was quiet
and alone
pleasantly alone
(she could tell because he didn't smell
like perfume)
tipped his hat to her twice
once when I showed him his seat, once when he sat
She bows her head
not watching
the movie
thinks about his smell in the dark
a pipe smell.

iii.
And
Hopper's lens
spares this kiss
opens on this wall
this light that is only spotting her
hair, her black patent-leather heels
this tiny flashlight turned off
and this hand at her side
this New York Story
of one real person in full color
staring down the green carpet
waiting for the lights to come
up.



Color Photograph - 8" x 10"

Eric Sullivan-"*Untitled*"

Xanadu

eat the bubbles
train the train
in my mind
and in my eyes
gobble the river
and lie in the bathtub
in the bridal suite
of angels and devils
I watch you make love to her
like poiseidon's daughter
reckless senses reeling
on the ocean's ceiling

cars pas by
they don't see us
they can't see us
see us laughing
at our stapled curtains
our noble intentions
such a lively pair
let's get lost
take fake names
go down the road
To Mexico.

in my head
my motorcycle and I
from Key West to Topeka
ride the yellow lines
not the lines on the floor
not the lines in the water
life here in the country
makes thoughts bleed
makes them bleed
like 93 octane
through the stucco ceiling.

asia's in the hot tub
soaking up the sensations
i'm in the kitchen
pouring some libations
turn around
and kiss the ground
hide somewhere
where you can't be found
if i were me
i'd dance with you
we'd dance to the sound
of an irish tune.

to this palace
i consecrate
the fruit i ate
the fruit of my vineyard

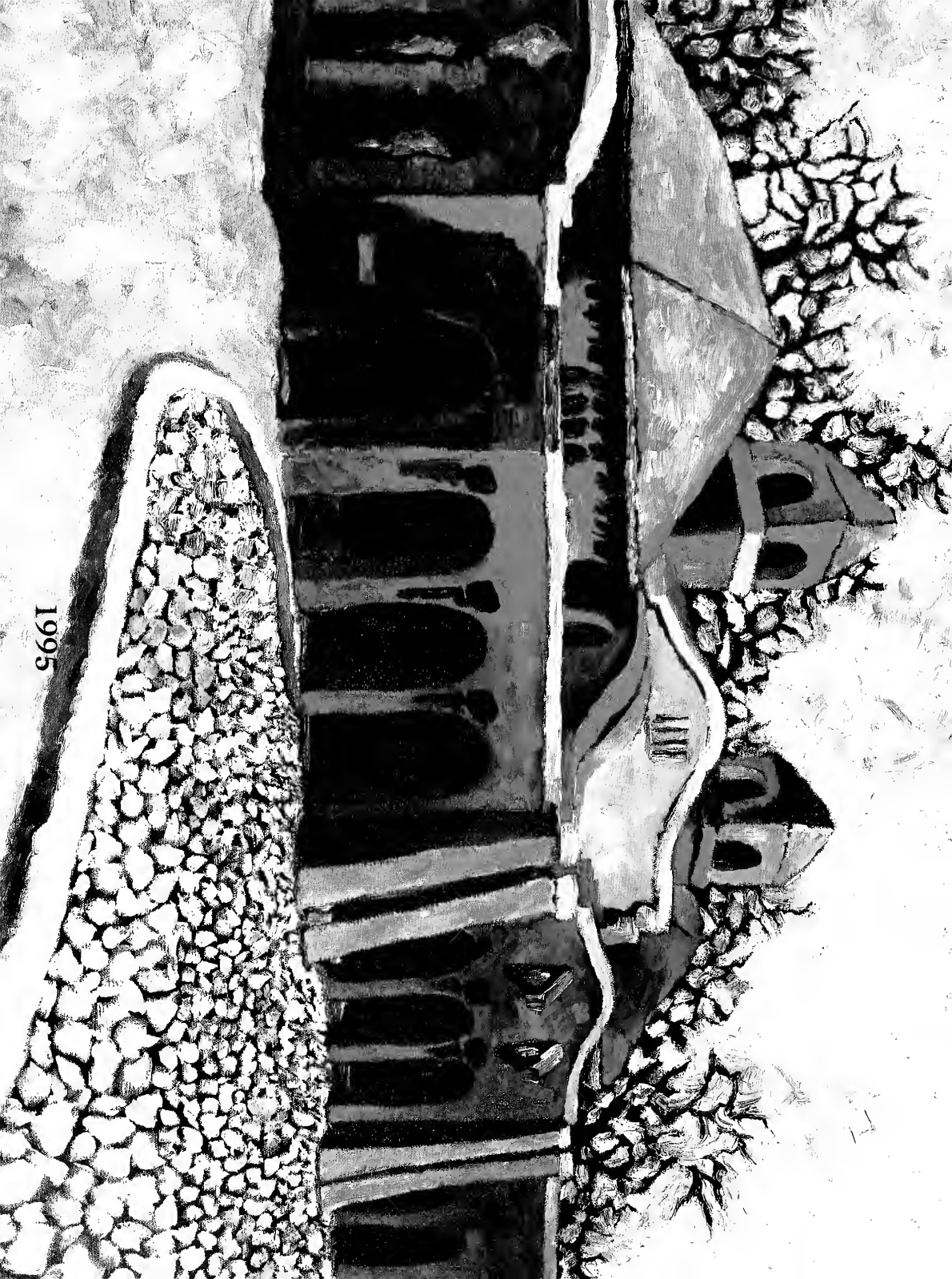
good fruit.

barges on the river
quiet boats in heat
under the auspices of winter's breath
the world succumbs to gentle Death
the lifeless masts
and the proud steel hulls
tickle the wind
with rusty sighs.

is there a natural rhythm?
do you smell it?

sleep, hot and holy,
visits at night
but doesn't snuff out
the candlelight
sleep is a good time
to have a home
on a steep bank
by an old river
a very old river.

—Clay McCaslin



1995