



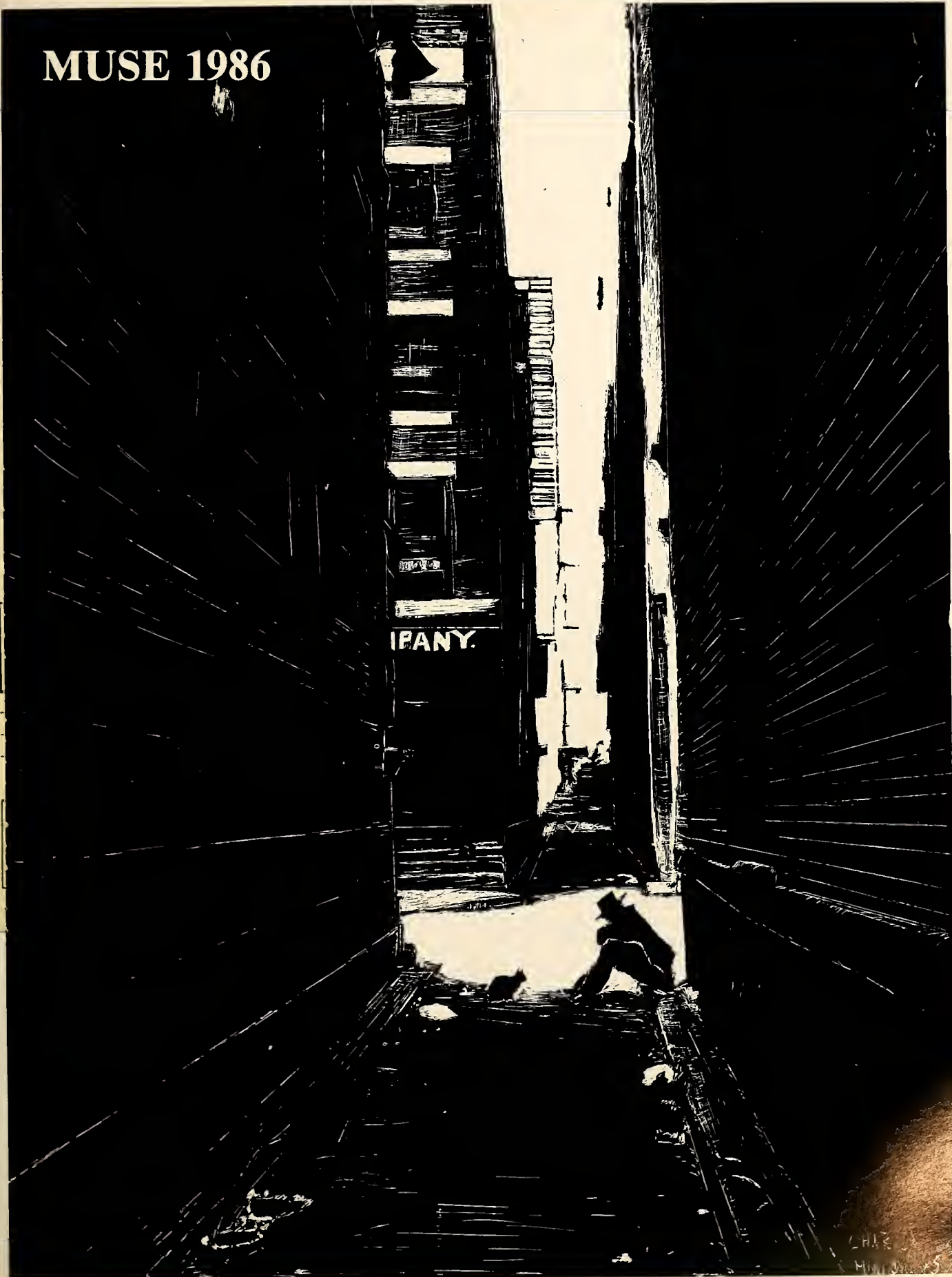
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MUSE 1986



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Stepping Stone
by Sarah McGuire

I held it truth, with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones
That men may rise on stepping-
stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.

Tennyson

MUSE 1986

Saint Mary's College

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With special thanks to the writers who read their works in
the 1986 ST. MARY'S MUSE WEEK LITERARY FESTIVAL:

GERALD BARRAX
CLYDE EDGERTON
BECKE ROUGHTON

**Cover Art by Charla Smith, Third Place Art, Muse Contest*

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@The Muse, 1986



Pen and Ink by Corinne Stickley

KODAK PAPER

June Ivey

The glossy surface seems to come alive again
as I stare at the bright pictures
my father and I took one summer.

Vibrant yellow, brilliant red, baby blue,
all of the tiny flowers enlarged
to see all of their perfection.

I remember the hot Colorado sun
blazing down on my back
as we patiently searched the clumps,
looking for one set apart with just
the right tilt for its jaunty blossom.

Then we held our breath so as not to disturb
that solitary bloom until the click
of the camera captured it forever.

GRAVESTONE

Sandra F. Jackson

Cold granite
Leaning against
The nineteenth-century house,
Scarring the white paint.

The displaced gravestone
Of some obscure man
Removed from his
Final resting place

Where the ground mulch
Feeding ferns
is his rotting marrow,
And the tarnished cross
Of a misplaced man
Is lost in pine.

*First Place, Poetry
Muse Contest*

TIRE

Sandra F. Jackson

Black Rubber
Inner Tube
Found
Two-tenths of a mile north of
Jennett's Fishing Pier,
Lying on sand,
In front of the
Sea Foam Motel.

Male and Female
Of the adventurous age
Fancy it
A Finder's Treat,
And roll it
In the opposite direction,
Running.

HIERARCHY

Havalan Sealy

If one sits in his own palace
at the end of a red carpet,
upon a throne,
beneath a crown,
Then he is a king.

Paupers do not own palaces.
Kings must play their part
and dominate nobles
and defeat dragons in war
and execute tiresome prisoners
or they would not be kings—
they would instead be

Ordinary men.
Ordinary men bake their own bread
and gaze through latticed windows
at the palaces they have built for the kings.
Ordinary men have queens for wives.

Kings marry princesses.
Paupers marry daughters.

I am a daughter. My mother is a queen.
My father was once
an Ordinary man.
I visit palaces and forget to curtsy.
I sleep with kings
and love their sons.

*Second Place, Poetry
Muse Contest*



*"The 1212" by Sarah McGuire
Honorable Mention, Art*

PILGRIMAGE

Lei Zimmerman

We travelled across the backyard
in wheel-barrow wagons,
herding purple cattle and
ragged families across a vast prairie.
We lived in a small wooden
structure, with two sliding
lids and a small door.
On the shore of our blue sea,
docked in murky harbor,
waiting, was our pilgrimage:
vessel to a new land, a woven
boat tied among massive oaks . . .
the sail, masts of leaves.
On the broader lawn
two armies clashed, horses squealing, weapons clanging,
the heart racing
with running feet.
The neighborhood raged, North Side and
South Side, to see who would control what,
or where, in the whole vast silence
after nightfall,
we would live.

*Third Place, Poetry
Muse Contest*

TURQUOISE DREAMS

June Ivey

As I idly fingered the silver necklace,
The squinted eyes of an Indian hunched
 behind the display attracted my gaze.
Those eyes nestled in her wrinkles
 held no trace of the pride
 that once led her people.
I had expected them to flicker
 with resentment or anger,
Directed not at me, but at what I
 represented.
Her whole being, devoid of emotion,
 frightened me,
So I whirled away, so as not to succumb
 to the worry of what else
 may have been lost in the past.

THE DREAM

Sallie Thorpe

High pitched sounds float
from the horn of the hiding man
as the anxious tigers watch
the girl relax in the cool shade
of the pointed leaves.
A crowded jungle, a mesh of green colors.
Tints of pink and blue flowers
surround the nest of the pleasant girl.
A watchful bird perches proudly
on the branch of a plentiful orange tree.



*Pen and Ink Drawing
by Marcy Everett
Honorable Mention, Muse Contest*

CATHY

by Jo Lee Credle

Cathy Harris and I were best buddies. We laughed, danced, and sang our way through the sixth grade. We used to call ourselves "The Three Musketeers minus one," and we were highly selective about who we picked as friends. As a matter of fact, we were the only two members of our club. Our clubhouse was my house every day after school for cookies and ice-cream. Just like the storybook moms, my brown-haired mom was waiting at the door nearly every day for us to get home, her face slightly lined, asking us how our day had been. She helped us out of our coats and steered us to the playroom to play quietly. Cathy was a little chubby and bruised easily, so we had to be careful. Even if she hardly tapped her arm on the door, she would show up the next day with a big bruise on her arm. She was a tomboy like I was, and we were always getting bumped and scraped.

We both enjoyed Little Theatre and we did the Broadway musical *Gypsy* together in the fall. During rehearsals, Cathy and I would go exploring the theatre, and we always managed to be somewhere other than where we were supposed to be. In school, we were in all of the same classes. During breaks, Cathy and I would skip down the halls singing "Together" from *Gypsy*. Our favorite class was Mr. Shaver's art period, because we did not have to be quiet. Cathy was the creative one of the two of us; I just tagged along to see what I could create. In class, she would give me moral support and try to cheer me up, saying, "That's okay; you can glue his nose back on later," or "Don't worry that you cracked your bowl; you can use it as a great pencil holder. It looks beautiful—really." Her art was actually the beautiful stuff, like that sold in high-priced stores where old blue-haired ladies shop. Each clay face was a realistic impression of her father with his deep-set eyes and dark eyebrows. Cathy had once shown me a picture of her family, but I'd never met her parents. She had no brothers or sisters, just her parents.

We had big plans for the future. We were going to go to the moon together as world class astronauts, or own a huge chocolate factory like Willy Wonka and eat fudge all day long. We knew we were going to grow up and be next door neighbors just like Barney and Fred on *The Flintstones*.

On Wednesdays we took ballet together at the Anderson School of Dance. The studio reminded us of the great big dance floors in the Nutcracker Ballet, only ours were not as shiny and they lacked the extra magic that the Sugar Plum Fairy could provide. Again, Cathy excelled in the field of dance as in all other things. While we were changing one day before class, I noticed that she had patches of blue-black on her stomach and legs. I asked her about them. "Did your pen explode on you, Cathy?"

"No," she responded as she quickly covered her body. "I fell, and you know how easily I bruise. It's nothing really. And they don't hurt." I let the subject drop. In school the

next day Cathy faked a fall. I knew it was fake because we had learned how to safely fall at play practice. She quickly stood up with the grace of a princess, brushed herself off, and said, "See? I'm so clumsy. I fall a lot and I get bruised easily." She wasn't clumsy; I'd seen her dance for hours and never fall. She had faked that fall and it did not make sense.

Some days in Physical Education her bruises kept her from participating in the activities. I would fake sickness just so I could sit on the sidelines with her and talk. No matter how much pain she was in, she would want to talk about me and my family. I compared her to Melanie from *Gone With The Wind* because she was never selfish, but always kind.

At the clubhouse one afternoon I asked her if I could spend the night with her since my brother was having one of his friends stay over. Her face turned white and she started to shake. I had never asked before and I guess it was the wrong thing to say. After a minute she recovered and said calmly, "This weekend isn't good. I think my parents are having some guests over and they won't want us in the way. I won't even ask."

"Why not?" I demanded, "I've let you stay over here millions of times. Why can't you even ask for one weekend?" No response came from Cathy; she just had a quiet, hurt expression. She left with no reply except the slamming of the screen door with the spring that was too strong for the flimsy door. "Fine," I thought, "Let her just go home and cry about it. She was always just an old meanie anyway." Two tears slid from my eyes and slowly watered my cheeks. I waited ten minutes to give her time to get home and decided to give her a call to apologize. She had told me to never call her at home because of homework, but this was important and we did not have any homework. After the fifth ring, a gruff, slurred voice answered the phone.

"Whatdayawant?" it asked. Her father's voice shocked me. I tried to smile as I said, "Is Cathy there, please?" A long pause followed and Cathy came to the phone. Almost in a whisper she asked, "Who is it?"

"It's me," I replied. "I called to apologize for what . . ." I was interrupted by her quick sputter.

"You should never call me here. We can talk in school tomorrow. I forgive you for what you said today. G'bye." Then she hung up. I stared at the phone for a while as I tried to figure out what had just happened. Scenes from movies passed through my mind as I pictured the burglar holding the hostage at gunpoint while the hostage tries to "act normal" on the phone. Of course Cathy was no hostage, and her father was no criminal, even with that slurred voice of his, but it gave me something to think while I tried to figure out the conversation we had just had.

The next day in school we were friends again, and Cathy acted just as if nothing had happened. In art class, we were

making plaster molds, so Mr. Shaver asked us to roll up our sleeves to avoid covering ourselves with plaster. I rolled up my sleeves and plunged my hands deep into the cool plaster. Cathy left hers down and used a spoon to dip out the plaster that she needed. Mr. Shaver asked her once more to roll up her sleeves, but she said her arms were ugly and had bruises where she and her father were playing tag. Still she would not roll up her sleeves, so she had to sit out of class.

That afternoon at the club after our snack, we were pretending to be World War II air fighters as we "flew" with arms outstretched around the kitchen shooting at the enemy-base dog in the corner. Then, suddenly by accident, I knocked a glass of bright red fruit punch on her blouse. Mom was doing laundry so she told Cathy that she could borrow one of my shirts while she washed Cathy's blouse. While Mom was helping Cathy slip off her blouse, she noticed a thin but very distinct red stripe on her back. Cathy said it was from her bookbag, and I believed her. Mom had given Cathy the same questioning glance that Mr. Shaver had, but Cathy just looked up with innocent eyes and thanked my mom for cleaning the shirt.

After dance class that Wednesday, Mrs. Anderson approached me and said, "Aren't you and Cathy good friends?"

"Yes," I replied with a puzzled face.

"Do you know her family well?"

"I only know what I've seen in the picture she showed me." I felt like I was being interrogated at police headquarters. I also felt like I was sneaking around behind Cathy's back, saying things about her without telling her. "I guess I'm not really sure what you're asking me, Mrs. Anderson."

"That's okay, honey. Go get dressed," she said smoothly. I waited outside with Cathy for my mom to come pick us up. A slight breeze blew Cathy's long hair over her face in stringy strands. Her shoes were neatly tucked in her dance bag and the arm of her sweater showed below the zipper. We were not laughing. She was just standing there with me. Our brown station wagon, after what seemed like an eternity, creaked up to the front of the studio. After we dropped Cathy off at her house, I told Mom what Mrs. Anderson had said. Mom just drove on without appearing shocked. I asked her why Mrs. Anderson would have said that. Again, I received no reply. Finally the silence was broken as she said, "Don't worry about it. It was probably nothing." I could see her brown eyes search like high beams for her thoughts.

A week later Cathy came skipping into class wearing a pretty pink dress and a big bow in her hair. She was whistling a bright tune that she had made up, and her face was looking bright and healthy. I was surprised at her energy as she

popped down in the chair beside mine. "You're acting very bright today, Cathy." Then I asked her sarcastically, "Are you feeling alright?"

"Yep!" She bounced her curled hair back and forth as she swung her legs over the seat. "I'm all alone with Mama this week because my father went to Las Vegas. Mom says I can dress up and look pretty all I want to this week because my father is gone." She sure was happy, and gleamed like polished silver. In no time we were back to skipping down the halls of Abner Middle School, whistling our old show tunes as if we had never stopped.

The week ended far too quickly. Cathy withdrew once again, snail-like, into her shell. Her father had returned. She began to wear her hair straight again and put on dull-colored clothes. Her face became hollow and sunken as the glow of the week dwindled to a dying spark. I also saw more bruises which I attributed to her fatigue, because I thought that would make her skin more sensitive and more apt to bruise.

About two weeks after her father returned from Las Vegas, Cathy came to school with tears in her eyes. "We're moving!" she cried. "We're moving, but they won't tell me where! Oh! I don't want to go! I like it here with you!" I tried to calm her down as a tear came to my eye, too.

"Tell me the whole story," I said as I sat her down on the steps. She went on crying. Finally she calmed down enough to spit out a few words.

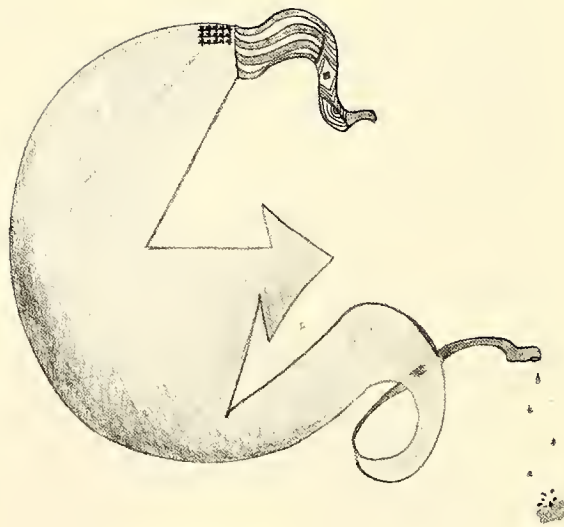
"My father was mumbling something about subpoenas, prosecution, conviction, and a bunch of other words that I didn't know. The only clear ones were 'gotta get out.' I'm so scared. We have ten days." Ten days was hardly enough time to do everything we had planned. I could not believe it. With the tears streaming down our faces like shiny mountain brooks, we tried to force smiles and talk about all the times we had had together. I even offered to go help her pack, but she asked me not to come over. During the next ten days in school we avoided the subject of moving and our time went by quickly. Then, without a good-bye, the house was abandoned and Cathy was gone.

Rumors began to circulate about why the Harrises left town so quickly. Some people said it was a drug scandal. Others blamed a large pile of debts. The most popular rumor was that Mr. Shaver, Mrs. Anderson, and even Mrs. Harris had submitted complaints of child abuse to the local authorities. I knew Cathy was not abused. She would have told me.

*Jo Lee Credle
First Place, Prose
Muse Contest*



*Pen and Ink Drawing
by Stephanie Godbold*



Pencil Drawing by Corinne Stickley

THE HOMUNCULUS

Havalan Sealy

Dark
inside of belly waters
you are foreign,
pathetic,
using furious flagellum
to swim your way
to where the shy droplet crouches—
A teardrop membrane lost in uterine cavern.
You, in combat with brothers
for conquest of our little queen,
are brave.
Red walls breathe and glisten, pulsate
like tongues laughing at your fate.
You human worm,
you are pungent when you die.

CLAUSTROPHOBIC ELEVATOR

Lei Zimmerman

What abuse this moveable
box goes through:
Up-down, up-down, to
Heaven and Hell and
back again, everyday.

Scratching and scraping—
The friction of mechanical
arms, spiked belts,
lifts the box and lowers
it with grinding force.

Zombies crowd this
electronic tomb,
and tiny demons, laughing
madly, leave behind
rough remarks on
white walls.



*Pen and Ink Drawing
by Stephanie Godbold
Second Place, Art*

MR. LASSITER'S NEIGHBORHOOD

by Sandra F. Jackson

Rays of natural light slipped between the slats of the venetian blinds and through the crystal prism hanging from the ceiling, creating a lovely spectrum on the muted, yellow lab desk. I watched the spectrum dance when the prism swayed in front of the open window, and was not listening intently to the lecture on nuclear physics.

"Alright, folks," Mr. Lassiter said, as he rocked in his chair, "we're nearing the end of the year. We've discussed the discoveries of the great physicists: the Curies, Niels Bohr, Einstein and others. We've studied uranium, plutonium, fission, fusion, nuclear power plants, reactors, nuclear warheads, and the inherent meaning of our nuclear age." He suddenly sounded very cynical. "But what have we learned?"

I picked up my pencil, pulled a scrap piece of paper from my notebook, and wrote, "Love the use of the word 'we'," then slipped it under the arm of my lab partner and best friend, Tracey.

"The majority of today's scientists agree that there will be no possibility of human survival in the case of nuclear war. You've heard all their arguments, the theories of total contamination, nuclear winter, and the others." Mr. Lassiter rose from his chair, placed his fists on the desk, and leaned forward. "This is Mr. Roger's neighborhood and we're going to play 'Let's Pretend.' Let's pretend the red buttons have finally been pushed. What do you do? Remember, it's your life we're discussing." A mechanical grin curved his thin lips, and he slowly put on the bifocals that had been hanging around his neck.

Silence met his glare. Vague mumbles sparked from the mouths of my classmates. Not knowing what kind of answer he expected, they resorted to desperate humor.

"I won't die a virgin," Tracey said softly.

"You said something, Tracey." Mr. Lassiter directed his strange stare at my friend. "Please repeat it."

"Yes." Tracey always thought quickly. "I said . . . I said I won't die for that reason."

"How mystifying! Please explain further, Miss Ashbloom." Lassiter began to show his teeth.

"Cyanide!" Tracey almost jumped. "Suicide. I won't sit and wait for radiation sickness, nuclear winter, and starvation to do me in."

I heard the familiar clink of a pen hitting the floor. "Danielle, could you get my pen?" Jeff, half sprawled across the table behind me like a beached whale, pretended to make an effort to retrieve the pen that had rolled under my chair. I grabbed the item and unwrapped the small note that I had expected to find under its clip. "For Tracey," he whispered as I handed him the pen.

"From Jeff," I murmured, giving the note to the intended victim.

Tracey read the note and passed it back to me for my perusal. Its contents were typical of Jeff: "Want to go out Friday? I hear there's going to be a good nuclear war."

Once again, Mr. Lassiter's voice broke the sound barrier. "What would you do, Mr. Lord?" he demanded. "Tracey is going to kill herself. I hope you have a better solution."

Jeff squirmed. "Hop a fast ship to the moon?" he said, eyes avoiding the instructor.

"Not feasible, Jeffrey. Try again." His tormentor would not relent.

"Antarctica?" Jeff shrugged.

"That's better, Jeff," I whispered. "You could eat the penguins."

"Out of time, folks. But seriously, dwell on the matter. Your two classmates, even in their pitiful attempts at humor, recognize the futility of life after a nuclear war. So give it some thought. If there's nothing to do after a nuclear confrontation, think about what you can do before one. You're the scientists and doctors of the future, so find a prevention, a cure, a way to insure the survival of the human race on the planet Earth. Dismissed."

Tracey and I grabbed our books and quickly exited Mr. Lassiter's dungeon. Jeff and his lab partner, Adam, caught up with us in the hall.

"I think Mr. Lassiter is still contemplating his own mortality," Adam joked, running his hand through his short, brown hair as if the fallout from the lecture might have landed there and stuck like dandruff.

"He seemed rather interested in Tracey's mortality as well," Jeff snickered, moving closer to my light-haired companion. "I can't believe you said you'd . . . well . . . enjoy yourself in a certain manner before kicking the bucket. I'm sure he heard."

"Yeah, just another stupid slip of the tongue!" Tracey blushed a solid pink. "Well," she said, turning to me, "We're going to be late for soccer practice, Dani."

"I've still got to get my cleats," I said. "Good luck on your tennis match, Adam." Adam was a bit shy and I enjoyed boosting his ego.

"Thanks," he responded happily.

Tracey and I turned to leave, but were once again stopped.

"Wait, Tracey," Jeff yelled. "What about Friday?"

"We could make it a double date, Danielle," Adam suggested.

Tracey and I shared amused glances. "Let's go for it," she urged quietly.

"Okay!" I yelled back. "Call us."

"Nuclear war Friday?" I elbowed Tracey.

"You kidding?" she laughed. "On a first date?"

We giggled like the smitten teenagers we were and quickened our pace, hoping we would not have to run extra laps for being late for practice.

After practice, I walked home briskly, not letting the sweat dry on my hot skin. I couldn't help dwelling on Tracey's use of the phrase "first date." It seemed awkward to

THE KILLER'S LAST THOUGHTS

Sandra F. Jackson

Oh God,
The Last Supper.
Bread, water, turkey slop.
Cranberry mush, suicide coffee.
Where's Judas?
I'm Judas.
I'm Cain.
Planned so well. Ha!
Betrayed by stupidity.
Knife in his back.
Flee. Flee.
Fingerprints? No.
Only cloth fibers in
My Mustang. Blood,
Skin flakes under my nails.
Insanity.
Plead insanity.
Stupid jury.
Premeditated murder!
Look at the motives.
Motives!
Christ.
Damned iron bars.
Guards. Holy guards.
Corridors. Mindless walk.
No appeal.
Doctors.
Audience. Got a damn Audience.
No gun, no gas, no chair.
No blindfold.
Syringe. Needle.
Long, gleaming
Needle.



*Ink Print by Neal Bryant
Honorable Mention, Art
Muse Contest*



*Green Acres by Sarah McGuire
First Place, Art
Muse Contest*

“To him who in the love of Nature holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language.”

—William Cullen Bryant

LOU-ANNE

by Katie McNeill

Billy and I was racing from the barn fast as we could, running towards Mama. He was just about to beat me, and I couldn't let him, so I shot forward with all my speed, and kept running and running and didn't ever look back, and thought I'd never touch Mama, and my feet was going to come through my shoes. I could feel the fire in 'em, and I thought I had to be safe, so I looked back and sure enough I was, and I reached Mama, and calmed down and turned around and stuck my tongue out at Billy, and he said, "I let you win—you're just a girl," and that made me so mad I started to kick him and Mama stopped me. She said she had a big surprise for us and to wash up and get ready for supper 'cause it was going to be special and she had a surprise for Daddy, too. Well, I couldn't imagine Daddy not knowing everything Mama knew, so I ran to get washed up and hear the big surprise. We all heard Daddy walking to the front porch and me and Billy opened the door before he got to the first step and we ran and jumped on his back and screamed, "Mama's got a surprise." I said, "Sit down quick!" and Billy said, "You got to 'cause we don't know nothing about the secret, and we're just dying."

Daddy didn't know what on earth was happening, so he just walked right in and kissed Mama and took his coat off and asked for his nightly usual, bourbon and *The Ridgeville Gazette*. He took his time reading the paper, and Mama went right back to the kitchen to finish our supper, and me and Billy was so mad 'cause we was going to burst if we didn't find out that secret. I ran to the kitchen to tell Mama I just couldn't wait, and if she'd tell me I'd swear not to breathe a word to Billy about it, but she flat out said, "No, Ma'am" and went to put the dishes on the table. I screamed to Billy to get Daddy 'cause it was time to eat, and he grabbed Daddy's hand, and ran to the table faster than I could blink my eyes.

Well, ten minutes went by, and fifteen, and twenty, and I finished my chicken, and my peas, and I even ate that rice pudding that I hate so much, and Mama and Daddy went right on talking about the burglary at Ace's Drug, and Mrs. Burney's cat in her pecan tree, and Mr. Edward's almost getting fired from the lumber company, until I couldn't stand it any longer, and I looked at Billy and he looked at me, and I screamed as loud as I could, "What's that darn secret?" Mama dropped her fork, and Daddy said, "That is no way to act at the supper table, young lady. You apologize." So I did and they went right back to talking, and me and Billy got so mad we was getting up to leave, and just as we did Mama said, "Okay, I know you two are anxious to know about my little secret, and your Daddy doesn't know what on earth all the commotion is, so let me tell you. Your Aunt Barbara called me today, and it seems she is feeling just awful, and can't get enough energy to do anything around the house these days, and Barbara said she needed me to come help out

for a few weeks. I told her I couldn't possibly leave the three of ya'll alone, and she said bring the whole family. So come Saturday we are all driving to Virginia."

Well, me and Billy had never been so happy. It had been so long since we took a vacation, 'cause Daddy don't make much money, and even if we was going to see Cousin Peter and Cousin Lou-Anne, I was excited and so was Billy. Now as for Daddy, he ain't one for trips, and especially to see Mama's relatives, but he knew we was all counting on it, and come Saturday we was ready to go.

We was all loaded up by 8:00 A.M. Daddy said we had to get an early start because we was going on an eight-hour trip, and with our old clankety station wagon, it would be a terrible drive. The car was packed full, and me and Billy barely had room to sit. I had brought plenty of comic books to have something to do, but before we left town I was dead asleep.

Next thing I knew I heard Mama screaming, "Barbara, Barbara," and I saw 'em hugging and crying. Daddy came around to the car and told me to help carry the food in, and Peter and Lou-Anne was talking to Billy. Then we all sat in Aunt Barbara's parlor and talked about dumb things like the rest of the family (Mama and Barbara's brothers) and Ridgeville and the weather, until me and Billy grabbed Peter and Lou-Anne and dragged 'em outside.

Billy said, "What do ya'll do around here? Ain't there nothing to do?" I said, "Yeah, I'm already bored." Peter and Lou-Anne looked at each other and then Peter said, "I got a horse named Dandy. You want to ride?" Well, that solved all; I had always wanted to ride a horse, and good 'ole Cousin Peter had one. We spent the rest of the day taking turns riding and leading Dandy. I figured that horse was about ready for dog meat 'cause he wasn't looking too good, but I kept my mouth shut and went right on riding.

Later that night I was lying in bed thinking how ugly this old farmhouse was, when I heard Mama and Daddy talking.

"John," says Mama, "I'm so glad we decided to come now. Seeing Barbara makes me really worried. She looks so pale, and she told me herself she's lost weight."

"Don't worry Betty, Barbara is fine. She just has a lot of strain on her, raising them kids herself. With us here a few weeks, she'll be back to normal soon," and I could tell Daddy was glad he had brought Mama 'cause she'd just worry all the more at home, and he'd have to listen to her saying she should be with Barbara. I hadn't ever really liked Lou-Anne or Peter, but I was feeling sorry for 'em now with their Mama being sick and their Daddy leaving 'em like he did.

The next morning we was all up early, and Mama had cooked us ham and eggs, and we was planning on riding the horse all day again. I asked Mama where Aunt Barbara was and she said she didn't feel good, and was going to be in bed a while. I didn't think nothing else about it, 'cause Peter ran in

and said Dandy was all saddled up.

We spent all morning riding through the woods and racing Dandy down by the creek. I didn't like the way Lou-Anne was acting; she was trying to keep Dandy all to herself, and when Peter told her to let me have a turn she said, "No, he's more mine than hers." I was getting fed up with it, so I decided to go see if Mama had cooked something to eat, and told Lou-Anne she could have Dandy all she wanted 'cause I was leaving.

When I finally got back to the house, I seen a strange car parked by ours. I couldn't figure out who in the world would come all the way out here, but I hoped they had children for me to play with, 'cause my cousins was making me sick.

I could hear some strange noises like gasping and crying coming from the parlor, but I walked on in, screaming "Lou-Anne is a hog." Everybody looked up and I could see Mama had the reddest face, and her eyes was big and puffy. Daddy was sitting by a man I'd never seen and I guessed it was his car out front. Daddy ran to me as soon as I entered the room and took me to the kitchen.

"What's wrong with Mama's face?" I asked. Daddy just asked me where Billy, Peter, and Lou-Anne was. I told him I left them by the creek 'cause they was hogging Dandy.

Daddy said to sit down 'cause he had something important to tell me. I asked him again why Mama's face was red, and he told me something I'd never heard before, 'cause I don't remember this happening to no one I knew.

"Honey, your Aunt Barbara died."

I just looked at him real hard 'cause it didn't make sense.

"She was alive last night," I said. Daddy said, "I know, but your Mama went in to check on her a little while ago and she couldn't wake her up. Seems she's been sick a long time and never told anyone. She must have felt she was dying and that's why she called your Mama. The doctor came and told us she's had something they call cancer.

"Is that who that strange man is?"

"Yes, and he's talking to your Mama. You go get Peter and Lou-Anne, and tell Billy to put the horse up. Don't tell them anything; you have to understand they are fixing to get a big shock. Let your Mama talk to them."

I left the house real confused, 'cause I didn't know what it meant to die. My grandparents had all died when I was young, I was told, but I didn't remember nothing, and I had an uncle to die two years ago, but I never knew him, and it wasn't like seeing someone one day, and they being gone the next.

When I got to the creek Lou-Anne was still on the horse, but I couldn't get mad, knowing what I knew. I told 'em to come with me 'cause Mama wanted to talk to them about something important. Lou-Anne said, "I ain't going 'til I'm through riding," and I said, "You better come now, or Daddy will be down here to get you."

Lou-Anne got off the horse, and she and Peter followed me while Billy put Dandy away. We walked slowly 'cause I was scared of what was fixing to be said to them. Lou-Anne was all huffy and saying, "Your Mama and Daddy are acting like they're my own parents, always making me do what I don't want to do." Peter told her to shut up and quit being a smart-ass kid. That made her mad and she started running to

the house, screaming for her Mama. Before I could stop her she was in the house, and running towards her Mama's bedroom. Me and Peter got to the doorstep, and we both froze solid right there, 'cause I heard Mama scream, "No, Lou-Anne," and I heard Lou-Anne screaming, "What's wrong with Mama?" Well then Peter ran inside, and by the time Billy got back to the house, Daddy was trying to calm Lou-Anne and Peter down and the doctor was trying to calm Mama down, and I never seen so many people crying, and I thought that had to be the worst day ever.

A few days after the funeral, we was sitting around, eating all the food folks brought over, and it seemed things would never be normal again 'cause people was in and out of the house all day, and Mama and the cousins ain't stopped crying yet, and I was sick and tired of being in Virginia, and couldn't wait to get away from Lou-Anne, when Mama hit me with the biggest surprise she could have ever thought of. She looked at Daddy and then at me and Billy and she said, "Children, I know the past week has been very hard on you, and quite upsetting for all of us, but we have to find a home for Lou-Anne and Peter now. Peter spoke up and said, "I'm almost ten years old, and I can take care of me and my sister."

Mama said for him not to be ridiculous, and that she knew he couldn't do that. She said she had a better idea. "Billy, you and your sister tell Lou-Anne and Peter how we'd love to have them live with us." I've never seen Billy's eyes get so big, and I almost laughed out loud 'cause Mama knew I didn't want them living with me. "Tell them, Billy," she said. Billy tried to do what Mama asked. "Lou-Anne and Peter, we . . . uh, we would love to have ya'll live with us."

"Over my dead body," I screamed, and ran out. I kept running towards the creek 'cause I could hear Lou-Anne crying again, and that noise made me sick.

I stayed at the creek for what seemed like hours. I was thinking of running away, but I figured it wouldn't make no difference 'cause Lou-Anne and Peter would still move in, and the thought of her in my room, without me, was making me madder. So I just sat, trying to think of how it was going to be at home now, and I was thinking how I could order Lou-Anne around and make her mad when I looked up and there she was. I started to leave but first I said, "What do you want?" She didn't say nothing, so this time I screamed it. "What do you want, Lou-Anne?" She sat down and looked at me real hard, and I could see her face was all red and puffy like Mama's that day. I could see how bad she felt now, and I was mad at myself for being so mean. She reached up and touched my hand and what she said made me cry myself, and that ain't never happened before. She was talking real soft, and she was breathing hard from all that crying, "I'm scared now. My Mama and Daddy are both gone. Will you please be my friend, 'cause I don't have no others."

I must have stared at her forever, but I couldn't think of nothing to say. I was just a little girl, too, and I don't know what I'd do without my Mama and Daddy, and the thought of them being gone made me cry, and we both cried for a long time, and I think she knew then that I was wanting to be her good friend, too.



After The Harvest by Sarah McGuire

And what is it but harvest,
the spires of heaven,
the hope of something higher
on this earth,
that keeps us living in this still, sweet land,
though we move toward the husks of stars?

—Anna Wooten-Hawkins

FANTASTIC LANDSCAPE

(After a Painting by The Followers of Rembrandt)

Jo Lee Credle

A small waterfall
pretends to flow carelessly down
a mountain;
sunshine bathes the land.
Brown dusk falls onto
slowly circling doves.
In a small square of sunlight,
caked-mud dwellings
tower over ghostly grave markers.
Small brambles protect
dusty roads
winding through mountains
thick with jagged cliffs
like reaching fingers.
Parched hills host herds of
grazing goats
under watchful eyes of shepherds.
Men work the dry soil
with aged hands,
picking a living
from centuries of packed clay.

*Honorable Mention, Poetry
Muse Contest*

PORTICI A POMPEII

**(After The Painting, "The Eruption of Mount Vesuvius"
by Pierre-Jaques Voltaire)**

Sandra F. Jackson

Timid moon
Illuminating the gray bay
Where three-masted ships
And small lateen-rigged boats
Flee the fire-mountain rage
Of the same Vesuvius
That destroyed Pompeii.
Hundreds run from a molten death
Over a stone aqueduct,
Whip horses, terror-eyed,
Pulling crude carts.
A carriage of privileged refugees
Passes the benevolent cross at
The end of the bridge,
Leaves the lava-lighted town of
Portici, its plaster domes and spires.
Two men lift a body draped in white,
place it in a rowboat
Under the bridge's arch,
A shelter from the fear.



*Pen and Ink Drawing
by Stephanie Godbold*

FRIENDS

by *Lei Zimmerman*

I remember when we were all brothers—me, Smokey, Josh, and Possum. We used to all hang out at the corner store, trying to act real tough like the older boys. When they would come in during the wee hours of the morning the four of us would gather around with the gang, and listen to the stories of their escapades. We would listen wild-eyed. The neighborhood gang was always cool with us, but to them we were just a bunch of wimpy kids.

We grew older though, and I guess we were around fifteen or so when we started smoking Camels and wearing leather jackets with white letters reading "Vandals." Then we were tough; nobody could touch us. Smokey, man, he was the fearless one. He led us into many a rumble against some of the toughest gangs on the South Side. The rest of us kind of designated him as leader since he never flinched or even lost his cool. Somehow he always managed to keep us together. That Smokey, he was really special; he might have been older than the rest of us, but he was the smallest bundle of nerves I've ever seen for a guy. And despite his size he could really pack a blade and some skin into a rumble. He was our man. Now Josh, he was different than any of us. He would never take anything serious, and because of this he got into a lot of trouble. I remember one time there was a robbery at the drug store and the police had caught the burglar inside, and when they weren't looking Josh made off with the patrol car. He was caught about two hours later parked in some poor old lady's driveway, dead drunk, with the sirens roaring. They put him in juvenile detention for two years for stealing, and the whole time he thought it was pretty funny. I sure didn't, and still don't. Josh was always kind of stupid, but he was still one of my brothers. Possum—well, he was a real mental case. His parents were constantly fighting, and his father would beat him every time the poor kid walked in the door. No wonder Possum was always on edge and fought all the time. You couldn't lay a hand on him without getting your teeth knocked out. We had to keep him calm around strangers, but he was a good man in a rumble and we needed him badly. As for me, I was always a dreamer, and hoped for better things. I especially had this big thing about wanting to become a writer. Of course they thought I was absolutely "wacked."

A phone clattered from the interior of the room. I moaned loudly and turned over. Half awake, I stared at the alarm clock that lay on the pillow beside me; it was six-thirty in the morning. It was too early to get up, and besides it was a Saturday. I reached down beside the bed, and pulling away the cracked leather jacket, I picked up the phone receiver. The phone stopped its infernal clanging.

"Hello." I managed to slur the word over my tongue.

"Hey dude," said a scratchy voice across the line, "just wanted to call and say we really miss ya kid, and need ya bad. Our numbers have kinda dwindled away."

"Gee Josh, didn't know ya felt that way," I answered back, sitting up in bed, "After ya'll gave me hell about writin' and dreamin' all the time, and took away my colors, I didn't think ya'll wanted to see me again."

"Not true, not true," Josh half-snapped. "You know Smokey, he's changed a lot. He's moving up in the world. The gang's grown a lot since you left; it went from the three of us to about a hundred and fifty, head count."

"Gosh, what's Smokey trying to do, raise a whole army or something?" I answered, astounded.

"Yeah, well," Josh stalled. "Hey, I got a message from Smokey—he wants to see ya in about an hour at the store. Sounds pretty urgent."

"Well, guess I'll see ya in an hour then," I said drowsily. "Nice talking with ya."

"Yeah, right." Josh's tired voice cracked over the phone, and the line went dead.

I let the receiver dangle aimlessly from my hand. My eyes followed the slow swinging process of the coiled wire; then I looked at the old leather jacket with clear cut creases running across its surface. That torn, weathered jacket contained many memories for me; the caked mud and oil that still remained splotched across its surface constantly reminded me of all the times Possum and I would hide under parked cars trying to get a peek at the girls across the street, and the torn gash across the left shoulder always made me laugh when I remembered the time Josh slashed me with a car antenna, just for something to do. Those had been the good days, but there was one thing I never did want to remember, and that was the time when I decided to go off to school. Smokey said nothing; he thought that I was just plain "wacked," and he stripped me of the gang's colors and excluded my name from founders of "Vandals." I couldn't help but wonder why Smokey, of all people in the world, wanted to see me now. I flopped back on the bed, and tried to go back to sleep for another hour.

An hour later, I found myself standing on the corner across from the drug store. The morning air was damp and chilly. I pulled the leather jacket even closer around my neck, and with slightly shaking hands managed to light a cigarette. A group of five boys stood around outside smoking and shoving each other around. I didn't know a single one of them, and this gave me a feeling of emptiness. After a few cars passed by on the street; I casually strolled on over. As I made my way through the group at the door, I was greeted with hostile stares. I knew what they were looking at, but didn't let this bother me. Inside, the strong lights gave an appearance of warmth compared to the grey dawn outside. I sat at the soda fountain, and being somewhat nervous, spun around on the swivelling stool. There were voices coming from the storage-room, in disagreement with each other. I didn't hear the footsteps behind me. I found myself being lifted from the stool and placed on my feet; my heart was beating fast and

my breath came in short gasps. I opened my eyes slowly, finding myself face to face with Josh. He hadn't changed one bit: he still had that same cynical, shrewd look in the eye and that same crooked, distorted smile.

"Man, you nearly gave me a major heart attack," I managed to say. "Don't ever scare me like that again; I may not live to be twenty-one."

We greeted each other cheerfully with the old club handshake. It felt good to be a part of it all again.

"Glad you decided to come," said Josh. "Smokey's changed things a lot, for our good, of course. He even has a big time job that pays tons every week. You'd be surprised—he's moving up in the world."

"Josh!" A deep sluggish voice came from the back room. "Who's out there?"

"An old friend come to see you," Josh shouted back.

In a few minutes Smokey appeared in the back entrance; he seemed to slouch more than usual, but he looked pretty much the same. He wore a pair of tight jeans and a tight black T-shirt, which showed off his broad shoulder muscles. His hair was greased back, and his features were harsh, yet what caught my attention was his eyes; they were no longer clear and sparkling, but glazed over. This gave him the odd effect of not being all there.

"Well, well," Smokey said. "Why if it isn't the college boy. Why the hell did you come back here?"

Smokey swayed slightly where he stood, and walked towards me with uneven steps. We stood, facing each other squarely; I looked straight into his eyes, but nothing was there. I knew then where all the so called "tons of money" were coming from.

"My God, Smokey," I said. "What have you done to yourself? You've been dealing drugs, haven't you?"

His eyes softened, and a sad smile spread across his face. "You did hear about Possum, didn't you?" he asked.

"No," I said, "What about him?"

"He was killed in a rumble last month along with five others," he said in a slightly careless tone.

I was too shocked to say anything. Why did things always turn out wrong? Or maybe it was for the best. At least Possum didn't have to live with his parents' abuse.

"Now that you know what Josh couldn't tell you, just get out of my sight and don't ever come back here!" he shouted angrily, making my eyes blink closed with the impact of each word.

"My pleasure," I said, and walked slowly out the door. I felt rejected, and I never wanted to see any of them again, especially not Smokey.

I sat at the kitchen table with my arms on its hard surface; I stared straight ahead, fingers spread. The wood floors of the room hadn't been swept in ages, and there were four weeks worth of dishes collecting in the sink; Mom didn't have any time to worry about the house; she had three jobs in order to put me through college. I traced Smokey's, Possum's, and Josh's names in the film of dust which covered the kitchen table. I couldn't just forget them; they had been my brothers. My eyes found a black spot on the kitchen wall. The spot moved. I blinked. It was a roach. I watched the bug's slow progress down the individual stems and buds of the wallpaper, over the bumpy floor molding, and then watched it scurry even faster across the slick wood floor, under the

table, and between my feet. It stopped there. I lifted my foot, and planted the heel of my tennis shoe over its ugly black body. There was a definitive crunch as the creature was smashed beneath my foot. I smiled wickedly, then laughed. That was what I thought of my past brothers. But then I broke down.

The back door slammed loudly, and there was the crackle of grocery bags as they were being placed on the table. My head came up with a start, and my tired red eyes stared into my mother's haggard face.

"Well, this must be *déjà vu*," she said, smiling tiredly. "I could have sworn I left you at this same exact spot after lunch."

I rubbed my eyes; they burned. "You did," I said.

"Well, come on you lazy bum," she asserted, "help your old mom put the food up."

She grabbed a dish rag and chased me around the kitchen, herding me towards the pantry. Mom always had a way to cheer me up when I was really down. She had this knack for doing housework; it was always a game for her.

"I hope your reflexes are good," she said. "Here, catch this."

In the blink of an eye she tossed a can of soup my way. I was ready, and caught it with one hand. And I placed the can carefully on the pantry shelf.

"Pretty good," she said, "Beginner's luck, right?"

"Yeah, I guess so," I said kindly.

She smiled at me proudly, and hummed a few bars of a Bruce Springsteen song. As I listened to her sweet voice echo through the kitchen, my mind wandered, and I thought about Smokey. Mom stopped humming and looked into my far-away gaze.

"Did you go see Smokey today?" she asked. She always knew what was bugging me.

"Yeah," I said.

"How was he doing?" she asked.

"Not so good," I said. "Mom, he's changed a whole lot, and I think he's getting into some trouble that he can't handle."

"He's still mad at you for leaving and going off to school, isn't he?" she asked.

"Yeah," I said, trying to shrug things off like I usually did.

"Well, I must say, that man's best friend is only himself . . ." she remarked, but was interrupted by the phone's ringing. My heart jumped ten feet, then sank to my stomach.

"Hello," Mom answered. "Yeah hold on, he's right here."

"Here," she said handing me the receiver. "It's Josh; sounds real urgent."

I took the receiver from her hand. For some odd reason, my hands were wet with cold sweat.

"Hey Josh, what's up?" I asked, my voice cracking over the line.

"Listen, Jake," Josh said in somewhat of a whisper. "Smokey's on a bad acid trip; he's gone crazy. I'm really freaked out, man. He swears he's gonna kill me."

"My God!" I said. "Where are you, Josh?"

"I'm in the storage-room at the store," he said, his breath coming fast over the phone. "I've locked myself in. Please hurry; he's gonna hurt himself. I'm scared."

"Okay, I'll be there as fast as I can." I put the receiver down quickly, and burst out the back door at a full run. I didn't hear mom frantically shouting after me; I just kept running and never looked back. I ran down the middle of the road; the yellow lines drifted up and down, as the steam rose from the hot pavement. My feet hit the pavement hard, leaving a dry indentation on the wet surface. I slowed to a walk; I hadn't even noticed it was raining until now. My hair was soaked through and was plastered close to my face. I couldn't understand my mother's philosophy about my being my own best friend. It really made no sense, and I could have cared less. Why was I being stupid enough to walk in the rain to help some bum who was no longer my best friend? But be damned if Smokey was going to so much as lay a hand on Josh; over my dead body he was. I guess that was the main idea. I started to run again, but more frantically this time, and with purpose.

A few minutes later I sat crouched in the shadows of the store front. Inside, it was pitch black, except for a small patch of light sliding across the floor, from underneath the storage-room door. Shadows loomed over my head, coming from tall shelves. There was no sound, no one there. I nervously rubbed my hands up and down my patched jeans; I had dared to light a cigarette, even though I was afraid of drawing attention to myself. I slowly stood up; my leg muscles ached. I peered into the store. There was nothing except for the valleys amongst the formless shelves. A sudden movement caught my eye, and a whole shelf came crashing through the glass window in front of me. I threw up an arm to protect myself from the flying glass, which burst out of its frame as if by some explosion. Small fragments of glass struck my arm and face, stinging. As I lowered my arm slowly from my face, I caught sight of a dark figure running toward the back door. Smokey was crazy; he had actually tried to kill me, and was making a move for Josh. I carefully picked my way through the jagged hole in the window, leaning close to the edges of the fallen shelf so as not to get stabbed. I then scurried down a nearby aisle. Keeping within sight of the storage-room, I crouched down low behind the shelves. The door to the storage-room opened and Josh appeared at its entrance. He had been alerted by the racket outside. Josh stepped cautiously out, away from the entrance; in the dim light I could see the glint of a blade, which he held comfortably in his hand. A shadow moved from behind the door. My breath caught deep and my heart stopped. I wanted to holler out and warn Josh, but I couldn't endanger both of us. Smokey came from behind the door, creeping slowly, quiet as an alley cat. He suddenly had his thickly-muscled arm around Josh's neck in a choking grip. Josh dropped the blade; it slid, clattering, across the cement floor. Then Smokey was actually choking the life out of Josh. I could see the glazed look in Smokey's eyes; all that was written in them was "kill." Smokey finally withdrew his arm from Josh's neck. Josh sank to his knees, out of breath. Then I could see Smokey grab Josh's jacket, and start beating him brutally. He kept striking Josh's face with a sharp object, a zip gun. With each blow my anger began to rise. I couldn't

just sit there, but I didn't know what to do. Then I remembered the dart gun I used for target practice that I kept hidden in a jacket pocket. I felt around in the deep pocket of my leather jacket; my fingers hit the cold metal cylinder of the gun. I tightened my grip around the cylinder, drew it from its hiding place, and stepped out from behind the shelves; with Smokey in my aim, I fired the gun. The dart drove home, implanting itself in the nerves of Smokey's wrist. He dropped the zip gun, gripping his hand. His cold, glaring eyes caught mine; they were full of hate. Josh slipped from Smokey's grip, crawled to the wall and leaned against it, out of breath and in pain. My hand was shaking wildly before me, and the dart gun slid from my grip. Smokey made a move for the zip gun, but without any hesitation I placed my foot over it, and stooping, retrieved Josh's blade.

"Smokey, I don't understand," I said. "What the hell are you tryin' to do?"

He lifted a hand to his face, as if confused or dizzy. "What are you talkin' about man?" he asked.

"You don't remember?" I asked, becoming confused myself. Then I said, "You were just trying to kill one of your brothers."

Smokey stared at me strangely; then he saw Josh's messed up face. And he began to cry like a baby.

"Oh man," he sobbed. "I didn't mean it. I'm so sorry."

"Sorry! Sorry!" I shouted "You weren't sorry; you were actually gonna do it. Do you realize what those drugs are doing to you; they're making ya crazy, man, real crazy."

"Oh come on, I can control 'em," he said, haughtily. "I was only tryin' to help ya'll."

"Help us!" I shouted. "Who do you think killed Possum? It wasn't an enemy of the gang. It was you."

Smokey stared at me in disbelief.

"And who was it who stripped me of my colors? It was you also," I said. I held Josh's blade out in front of me now. "You don't deserve leadership, Smokey. You're dangerous. I'm taking over now, and as far as I'm concerned you'd better not show your face in this neighborhood again."

"You can't take this away from me!" Smokey shouted. "The gang's all I've got. This turf is what I've earned with my blood."

"Earned with stupidity, more likely," I remarked.

"What're you gonna do with the 'Vandals', school boy?" Smokey asked.

"As leader, I'm disbanding them," I said, tightening my grip on the blade.

"The hell you are," Smokey shouted. "You won't have the guts with me around."

"I wouldn't bet on that one," I said. And with a swift motion I moved forward and slashed the blade across Smokey's left cheek. A slim red line formed, slanting down towards his chin. Smokey had no choice now but to leave; I had humiliated him in front of a brother. He didn't so much as look at me, or even at Josh. He wiped the tears away with a grimy hand, and turning, he walked out the back door.

*Lei Zimmerman
Third Place, Prose
Muse Contest*



Pencil Drawing by Anne Miller

A FLAUTIST'S DREAM

by Holly Coward

Isik Batmaz was the most renowned flautist in Turkey. Not only was she well-known but she was also very highly respected. However, many of her countrymen resented her because of the opportunities that she had been given as a child. They thought that she had an easy life being from such a prestigious family because she had never had to overcome the trials suffered by the poor and oppressed. Isik was very aware that without her rich upbringing she never would have come so far. Thanks to the encouragement of her father, she was able to escape the fate of most Turkish nobility, and instead of becoming a wife was able to pursue her dreams. Now she was proudly representing the finest of Turkey's musicians by going to America to make her international debut. As she drifted into a reverie, she thought of the important events in her life which had led to her success.

Isik had known from early childhood that her interests lay in the arts. Even though she was too conscientious to do badly in anything, her real enjoyment came from music. She often went to musicals, plays, and concerts; every time she went to one, she felt as if the voices or instruments were calling to her like the Greek sirens who lured the young men to their deaths. All of her peers considered opera and classical music to be extremely boring, but Isik found it easy to relate to this type of music. Instead of hearing a multitude of instruments, she could hear each individual one's harmonious tone.

At one concert a flautist played in her direction throughout the entire performance. Isik was so enchanted with the instrument that she went backstage after the performance to speak with the player. He was flattered by her enthusiasm so he gave her a short lesson. Because, as it turned out, he was a friend of her father, and because he thought that Isik did have an aptitude for music, he personally recommended her to a flute instructor who was also backstage. She made arrangements with the flute teacher to take a lesson once a week. When her teacher, a renowned American flautist by the name of Art Winslow, recognized her talent, he scheduled her for instruction every day.

From that point on Isik Batmaz threw herself headlong into her lessons at the Gemayel Conservatory. She found that she and her American instructor worked quite well together because he could identify with her musical setbacks. He had been through them before, both personally and with his eldest son, Ivan.

With each lesson Isik felt more and more at one with her flute. She found it easy to go to school, take an hour lesson, and then give a half-hour performance known as an *exposé*. After this she would go home and practice for hours on end, only taking breaks to do homework.

Isik enjoyed the thirty-minute concerts which she gave at the end of each lesson. This was good practice for the students, all of whom were destined to become professionals.

Sometimes famous instrumentalists who were visiting the area came to see the students perform. Once she met Pishad Osakan, who had already become a famous cellist in the Turkish Governmental Grand Orchestra. This group consisted of the best musicians in each instrumental division. Isik also met a man she had heard much about, Ivan Winslow, her teacher's son and protégé.

At one point, Isik came to a standstill. Since she had already surpassed all the other student musicians at the conservatory in musical ability, she felt that her next step was to become as skillful as the professionals. This was, however, disturbing to her because that was quite a long way away. What achievements could she accomplish before then? With whom could she compete?

Then Isik met her opponent. One day she was walking down the hallway towards her lesson room when she heard someone playing a flute. It was a very rich sound full of strength and breath support, but at the same time it had a light-hearted style that only a very experienced flautist could produce. Her heart began to beat with apprehension. She welcomed a challenge, but she also felt as if someone were shoving her out of the place which she had worked so hard to earn. As she approached the door to the room, she swore to herself that some day she would be that good. Isik opened the door, only to see that it was Ivan, Art's son, who was playing so well. She joined in with the applause which the audience was showering upon him. A few minutes later, she went to compliment him and said, "I was very impressed with your *exposé*, Ivan.

"Oh, it was not really an *exposé*," Ivan replied. "I performed my last *exposé* three years ago to this day. Now I am touring professionally," he said before he walked abruptly away. Isik felt that Ivan was perhaps trying to make her feel inferior. Sometimes she almost felt that she could read other people's minds, possibly because her closeness to music as a way of expression had sharpened her senses.

Isik, a few seconds later, approached Ivan and Art, who were talking. Art, who had gotten to know Isik very well, said to her before she even spoke, "Remember, you will have no lesson today, because I told you my plan is to spend the weekend with my son, celebrating his anniversary of success." As if suddenly realizing the oversight, Art asked, "Ivan, have you met Isik? I have told you about her. She is my most apt and enthusiastic protégé." Ivan, casting an inquisitive glance at her, said, "We have met before." Isik smiled and said, "I have complimented him on his performance."

In an effort to make an impression on Ivan, she asked Art if he could locate a challenging piece for her to perform soon, for she was feeling ambitious. The instructor turned around and grabbed the sheet music from the music stand which Ivan had been using. "I think that you are ready for

this," Art said with a wink. Isik's heart began to beat faster as she heard Ivan say, "I should like to hear this aria played by you during your exposé on Monday. Isik quickly pronounced her goodbyes so that she could go somewhere quiet to regain her composure.

As she walked home, Isik read frantically over the music that Art had given her because she only had two days to prepare the piece. Her eyes scanned the notes and she moved her fingers as if the air were the flute keys. Upon arriving home, Isik quickly greeted her family and headed upstairs past the bedroom to the loft. This was a favorite place of hers because of the acoustics. Her flute seemed to echo throughout the small place. She pulled her music stand from the corner to the center of the room and opened her flute case. She played a few notes to warm up and quickly went into action. First she counted out the rhythm of every note. Next she counted aloud while putting her fingers through the rhythmic note sequences. Then she took a deep breath and began to play. Methodically she went over every line, counting the rhythm with her feet and producing the notes through the flute. After she had perfected one line, she continued to the next one.

This went on for several hours until a knock was heard at the door. The butler entered with a tray laden with "performers' foods," foods which are good for a musician before a performance. There were no cold foods because those would close the throat and affect the breath control. There also were no salty foods because those would parch the lips and weaken the embouchure, or mouth position. Isik finished the meal and continued practicing.

Later on that evening she peered at her watch and simultaneously heard a knock at the door. It was her father, who told her with a smile that she played beautifully. He also asked her if she could play the entire piece for him. Isik consented and decided that one more time through the song would conclude her practicing for the day since it was nearly twelve o'clock.

She arranged the pages carefully and took a deep breath. As she played through the piece she felt her spirit soar with every note. Concentrating mostly on accuracy, she added a little of her natural style. The notes fluttered back and forth and she felt content, knowing that in one evening of hard work she had almost perfected a very difficult aria. However, Isik knew that she still had to polish the crescendoes and staccatos which the composer usually left to the performer's imagination.

When she finished and the echo of her final note resounded in the loft, her father hugged her with pride. He could see that his own ambitious qualities had been made incarnate in his daughter. They both left the room to go to bed after Isik had wrapped her flute in a damp cloth and laid it in a rafter near the roof for warmth. She planned to return throughout the weekend to practice.

On Saturday she played for hours, only stopping to let

her flute cool or to scribble on the sheet music. She observed that her marks were quite different from those left by Ivan, but she considered that to be the sign of a difference in style. She found herself playing frantically late Sunday evening because she knew that time was running out. At ten o'clock as she had planned, she tidied up the loft and took her flute and her music to the parlor to play for her family. Her sisters, her brother, and her parents were waiting eagerly, for they could feel the tension in the house though they knew better than to ask Isik about it. She began quite shakily, but as she played the piece, she found herself calmed by the soothing sound of the instrument. Isik, who was good at sensing an audience's reaction to a performance, could feel positive attention coming from those in the room. Often her mother showed some signs of disapproval, but on the whole the family was supportive. After she finished, she thanked her family for their time and went to bed, utterly exhausted.

Throughout the next day Isik felt very anxious. All her classes seemed to drag on as if the clock were moving backwards instead of forwards. However, school finally ended and the time drew nearer. During her lesson, Isik found it very hard to concentrate. All she could think of was the outcome of her exposé. After much frustration, the lesson did end and Art Winslow called Ivan in to watch. The accompanist began to play the introduction, and with each key that was pressed, Isik's heart beat more rapidly. Suddenly her entrance was not far away, so she took a big breath and began.

It happened before she even realized it. The piano got ahead of her and she found it increasingly difficult to coordinate her thoughts with the action of her fingers on the keys. Suddenly, she realized that it was too late; she must stop and wait to find her place again. Her eyes darted across the page as she tried desperately to do so. She panicked, wondering if she could get back in on time. The seconds seemed like hours as she felt the disapproving eyes of Ivan Winslow bearing down upon her back. It was as if he were pushing against her instead of for her. Surely he can sympathize, thought Isik. On an impulse she caught a glimpse of a note and the ones played by the pianist corresponded. As she jumped with full force into the middle of the piece, she realized that she had succeeded in her own way. She might not have played it as elegantly as Ivan did, but she had shown her professionalism by a perfect recovery. She had accomplished what she had wanted to after all.

* * * * *

"We are now landing in Kennedy Airport," chanted the cheerful stewardess. But what was resounding throughout Isik Batmaz's mind was the last note which had chimed so beautifully at the end of her immaculate recovery during her exposé two weeks prior. She was also aware of the security which she felt sitting next to someone she considered an equal, one of the most talented and most professional flautists, Ivan Winslow.

*Holly Coward
Honorable Mention, Prose
Muse Contest*



Oil Pastel by Lei Zimmerman

WATER POEM

Corinne Stickle

Leave the dock and
venture our way across
clear sensual swells,
Peaceful Solitude.

Loneliness, Tenderness,
and Closeness
bond me with the
sea.

Lights across the
Peacefulness
stray away with the
wind that blows me
deeper and deeper.

Glittering moon and
stars shine hope upon me,
Breezes blow rustling
at the sails—
Cool Midnight.

The voice of life is speaking to me.

One silent sky
fills with smoky gray clouds
that pass the moon.

Will we know each other in
the night, one step
removed from the world,
one step removed from a
material blown molecular insignificance,
one step through the mind
into a sweet Such-ness.

New Day slowly descends
Closer to land
out of the Such-ness (but
still lingers on).

May I see clearly,
Accept another day.
May it be as lovely as
the Midnight
upon the sensitive swells.

Will the light of such
a Such-ness return?

AT THE PERFECT PLACE

Caroline Oldenburg

The quietness of the lake
Surrounds me.
My house is tucked away in
the cove like a new-born fawn.
The trees drip petals onto
the glass lake.
A soft breeze dances them
to the water's edge.



Photograph by Caroline Landis

THE FIGHT

Margaret Dossenbach

After the struggle
We'll tread softly
In the careful air.

Like old men
We'll set our coffee down
Slowly, not spilling a drop.

Until you
Smile a cautious smile
And with a sigh
The strain escapes.

*Honorable Mention, Poetry
Muse Contest*











"St. Mary's Girls"
by Sarah McGuire
Second Place, Art, Muse Contest

"The moon shines, violets grow, spring
Arrives, summer endures, and trees and seas
And breezes whisper, all for them."

Gerald Barrax
from "Lovers"

MUSE 1987

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE



Photo by Christina Hunsicker

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**Cover Art by Jo Jo Allred, First Place Art, Muse Contest*

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Photograph by Susan Sommers

BREACHED BEAVER DAM
(After A Painting by Neil Welliver)

Dawn DeBruhl

Standing at its edge, I feel
compelled to throw myself into
the swamp's welcoming world.

but I hold back; its mysterious features
startle me:
crisp green patches of grass
scattered over mirror-like water,
tall, paper-white branches sprouting up
from underneath.

Bending over, the trees appear to check
their reflections, cast in sparkling liquid.

WINTER

Christi Davis

Winter rings in the
air, slowing down
the months like a
pulse.

Snow drapes the
land with strings
of pearls; trees
drink life from those
jewels, shimmering
lustre on mirrors of
icicles.

Branches reach from
an old oak, grasping
for life, arms swaying like
tentacles through the
cold.



*Woodcut by Lisey Wilson
Honorable Mention, Art
Muse Contest*

THE GARDEN PARASOL

Gray McElveen

A rainbow-sherbert parasol shadows a fragment
of the mist-covered garden.
Two ladies in ivory dresses delight over the finest
cappuccino served in France while a sliver of watermelon
light drips over the folds of a linen skirt, draped
over a lattice lawn chair.
Garden bells ring with delight in reflections of
sea-soaked corals and tender jades.
The emerald ground glistens with painter's dew
as sunlight crawls over grass blades soft as eyelashes.

THE RAPE OF THE SABINE WOMEN (After A Painting by Nicolas Poussin)

Grayson Savage

A stormy stone town.
Babies dressed in robes.
Running men and women fill the streets.
A single horse moves as if he is dancing on burning grass.
Men overcome the robed women,
carrying them off like mattresses
to have their way with them.
Fat-thighed women struggle in vain,
and cannot forgive the ways of the unwelcome visitors.



by Caroline Long
Honorable Mention, Art

ON A DOVE'S WINGS

Lei Zimmerman

In the corridor We stood,
my silver wings held your
soft whiteness in a dove's
kiss.

We perched on a park bench,
picked Each other's hearts apart,
and above the veranda
eclipsed Battery we flew
together.

In the light of a parking lot,
our wings touched, flirted,
tangled among Themselves.

*Second Place, Poetry
Muse Contest*



*"Happy Birthday" by E. Ann Yancy
Honorable Mention, Art
Muse Contest*

SUSAN

by Marcy Everett

It is a hot, sticky night and Susan can't sleep. Mrs. Weller's cat is walking on her windowsill. Susan can tell without looking behind her because the cat's shadow is moving on her bedroom wall like a ghost. She used to get scared by the ghost when she first came to live with Terry. She wanted to scream so somebody could hear her. In this neighborhood it wouldn't matter if somebody did; all they would do is just turn over and go back to sleep.

Susan is thirteen, and able to take care of herself. It's a good thing, too, because nobody would care if she screamed except her mother's friend, Terry, and he isn't there. He left a few weeks ago and assured Susan he'd be back in a few weeks with a big surprise for her.

In the morning, Susan will go with Mrs. Weller to do her grocery shopping. She only lives next door and Susan could easily walk two steps to her house, but Mrs. Weller insists on picking Susan up at her front door. Susan doesn't think Mrs. Weller wants her in her house. Mrs. Weller's bedroom is probably on the other side of the wall next to Susan's and she wonders what old ladies dream about.

Instead of going to a Food Lion and saving money, Mrs. Weller goes to a little store where they charge so much more. Susan is wearing flip flops, shorts, and a halter top, so she is freezing as she goes up and down the aisles getting things on Mrs. Weller's list. She is parked out front. Susan doesn't think Mrs. Weller trusts her; Mrs. Weller never gives Susan the money when she goes into the store. Maybe she thinks she will lose it or something. Susan has to let the lady ring it up and then run to the car to get the money and when she returns to the car, Mrs. Weller always checks the change with the receipt.

Mrs. Weller drives slow with all the windows up, but Susan doesn't mind because it is the only time she gets to ride in a car since Terry doesn't have one. Mrs. Weller always gives Susan a dollar and never wants her help carrying the bags inside, so Susan runs home.

Susan sits in the kitchen and thinks about what she could buy with that dollar, plus some of the money that Terry gave her before he left. She thinks about all the magazines, or make-up, or slacks she could buy, but she knows that Terry would be mad if she wasted the money on stuff she doesn't really need.

Susan goes to the refrigerator and gets out some jelly that she paid 99 cents for, and Mrs. Weller, in the rip-off store, paid a dollar and a half for. As Susan sits at the table eating, she thinks about when Terry is coming back.

She considers a few weeks to be two or three, and he left two and a half weeks ago. She wonders if he meant five or six.

Susan first came to live in this old house a few years ago just before her Mother died. Her mom was real sick and told the children she was going to die. Before she did she brought Susan here to stay with Terry. Susan already knew Terry; he was a good friend of her Mother's and used to come over for dinner a lot. One day Terry told Susan that her mom was dead, and Susan didn't really believe him and didn't even cry. She still pictured her mom at home, in bed, taking the medicine, and reading a book. She came to accept it by picturing her on vacation and not coming back. Susan is only sad when she wants to call her on the phone and remembers that she can't.

Susan is sitting on her front stoop, reading a comic book, when her friend Hillary Stunda comes by. She invites Susan to her house for dinner and Susan says she can't go because Terry told her not to go to any one else's house while he is gone. Hillary then asks Susan if she can spend the night and Susan again says she can't. Hillary tells Susan that her mom doesn't think Terry is ever coming home, because he is off somewhere drinking and gambling all his money away. Susan rages and tells Hillary that it isn't true and that he is bringing her a surprise when he comes, and he is coming any day now. Susan is so mad at Hillary that she wants to hit her.

Hillary snoots off and speaks in her fancy voice that she uses when she knows she has made someone mad. Susan yells after her that she wouldn't eat at her house anyway, even if she was paid.

Susan reads all the next day and is hoping Mrs. Weller will invite her in for dinner or something but she doesn't. Susan goes inside and fixes herself a bologna sandwich and a glass of ice water. She goes to bed early that night, hoping it will make her sleep better but it doesn't. She tosses and turns from side to side, from stomach to back, but she can't get comfortable. She decides not to think about Terry anymore and when he is coming home, so she'll be surprised when he comes.

Mrs. Weller's cat is sleeping on Susan's windowsill and doesn't wake up when an ambulance comes by. Susan jumps out of bed to see where it is going and it parks in front of Mrs. Weller's house behind her car. Susan sees the men bring her out on a stretcher and Mrs. Weller looks wide awake, looking all around. Susan doesn't want to look any more so she goes back to bed.

This has happened a few times before, so Susan

knows what to expect. Some old lady will come and do all her errands for her and Susan will feed her cat. In a few weeks Mrs. Weller will come home and everything will be back to normal. Meanwhile, Mrs. Weller's cat is still asleep on the windowsill, unaware that her mistress is being taken away.

Susan imagines Mrs. Weller in the hospital, frightened, and far away from home and cat. Susan starts to cry and the tears run down her cheeks into her ears. She falls asleep thinking about doctors and stretchers, ambulances and medicine. She thought Mrs. Weller was better the last time she recovered.

Then Terry is standing at Susan's bed talking about his surprise that he promised her. It is 2:00 A.M. and he has returned in the middle of the night as Susan thought he would. Susan asks what the surprise is, but he doesn't tell her because it wouldn't be a surprise otherwise.

Susan tells Terry what Hillary Stunda has said about his coming back and his being a crook. Susan says he knows that Hillary is wrong. Terry tells Susan to forget it and to think about the surprise.

Susan crawls out of bed and follows Terry down the steps, still in her night gown. Terry points out the window behind Mrs. Weller's car. There is a shiny new car parked there.

Terry asks Susan if she wants to go for a spin. Susan says yes and they start driving. Terry asks her where she wants to go and Susan doesn't know because she has never been anywhere far from home. They pass the grocery store where Susan goes for Mrs. Weller, and it looks different all closed up at night.

Terry drives much faster than Mrs. Weller, so Susan holds onto the dashboard. When he starts the motor, it hums and sounds smooth unlike Mrs. Weller's car that coughs. The interior is like soft velvet. Terry asks Susan where she wants to go and she doesn't know. Susan notices that they are on a ramp that she can see from her bedroom window. Susan looks back and thinks she can see her house next to Mrs. Weller's, and the cat still on the windowsill. The car is the only car on the ramp, and the ramp is lit up by street lights, making it look like daytime only where they are. Susan is thinking about Mrs. Weller in the ambulance and how fast she must have gone, not even stopping for red lights. Susan feels unafraid. She thought before she would have been scared on the ramp. But it is like flying up to heaven, Susan thinks.

*Marcy Everett
First Place, Prose
Muse Contest*



*"Swimmer" by Elizabeth Grine
Third Place, Art, Muse Contest*



*Pen and Ink Drawing
by Jamie Allen*

PEN AND INK

Christi Davis

Creating lines like
the waves of the ocean,
my pen and ink glide
across the horizontal
lines of my thoughts.

Moving and swaying,
my pen becomes the
wind back and forth,
the stormy weather
that settles at the
end of the page.

LATE NIGHT DOUGHNUTS

(Descriptive Essay)

by Neely Barnwell

I am an outsider, an intruder in the sacred territory of the people who have been here much longer than I have. The "Krispy Kreme" doughnut shop is "home" to most of the people who have parked themselves at the blue-green, gold-flecked countertop on this bone-chilling winter night. To these people, I am just as unwelcome as the icy draft that blows through the door each time it is opened.

I have located an unoccupied stool at the bottom of the "U"-shaped counter, and it seems as if every pair of eyes in the room is resting on me. The waitress is busy, so I have no coffee cup to hide my face in and no doughnut to toy with. In an attempt to avoid the eyes of all these strangers, I begin to study the restaurant itself. The "dining area" is made up of three large window/walls that offer a view of the pot-holed parking lot and a gas station across the street. In the parking lot there stands the tall, neon sign with the "Krispy Kreme" logo. The bright red and green lights of the sign seem strangely out of place in this dark and quiet neighborhood, and there is a section of the sign that has been shattered, most likely the result of some juvenile gang's pranks. At the top of each window, there is a stack of dust-caked venetian blinds that hang unevenly from window to window, yet another sign of the neglect that affects the entire appearance of the doughnut shop. The room is lit by glaring fluorescent lights that "buzz" annoyingly beneath their rust-stained light covers. By this time, a fresh batch of doughnuts is traveling slowly up the conveyor belt from the oven. The waitress finally takes my order.

She is elderly and a bit fragile, and wears cat-eye glasses that have the plastic temple pieces like you see in the movies. She is faithfully wearing her uniform, from the white baseball hat with the pom-pom on top to the white "nurse" shoes with soles at least two inches thick. As she moves away to fill my order, I notice that the people around the counter have ceased staring at me. I suppose that the waitress has to accept you by taking your order before you can be considered non-threatening. Then I notice the people around me, starting with the

man sitting around the corner of the counter to my right side. He has dull brown hair that has no particular shape to it and he looks to be about thirty years old. He is wearing a well-worn sweater the color of an old cardboard box; on the counter in front of him there lies a flat gold pack of "Winstons" and a blue lighter. His eyes wander around the room as he rolls up a dollar bill out of boredom; I overhear the waitresses calling him by his first name. He tries to make conversation with the people around him by eavesdropping, and he tells me that he comes here every night. "Yep, a diabetic tried to overdose here last night. Ate three boxes of glazed doughnuts." He calls to me in an attempt to make conversation. I smile politely in response to his ridiculous remark, and notice for the first time the way that his eyes shine when someone speaks to him. I realize how lonely he must be.

The waitress has finally brought me my cup of coffee, mandatory if one expects to fit in here, and my doughnut. The coffee has a slightly stale taste, so I compensate by adding more cream than usual. My doughnut is the kind with the crispy haze of sugar covering it and it rests on the counter on top of a translucent sheet of tissue. I push away a glass ashtray that still retains the cigarette butts of whoever was here before me, and notice a raspberry jelly smear on the mirrored napkin dispenser in front of me. My eyes lift as I take a slow draught of my coffee, and I see that the waitress has begun to unload the dishwasher. All the coffee cups and all the ashtrays are stacked in one bin that slides into the machine to wash them all at once, and I decide that maybe I do not need this coffee after all.

The door opens and a young couple comes in. They sit down to order doughnuts and coffee and I find that I am staring at them along with everyone else in the room. It is as if I have reached an understanding with all of these people. I am no longer the intruder; I am an observer, just as they are. From this point on, the doughnut shop takes on a different feel; it is as if I am sharing a cup of coffee with old friends.

COLLAGE

Jo Jo Allred

I am leading a boring life.
I am watching the world bebop
 by in hightop fluorescent Reeboks.
I had an even more boring childhood.
I had a Pinto pony and a boyfriend who
 dressed like a mailman. (He was later
 senior class president, voted most
 popular. My, how times change.)
I thought I was a princess living in a
 purple flower.
And now at 18
I have seen the great sadness.
I have seen that my idols are flesh and
 blood like anyone else.
I have heard lies and truths and I know
 the difference.
I have heard that God is dead, but I
 wonder if he ever lived to begin with.
I know that Robert Palmer is gay.
I know that things aren't always what
 they seem.
I don't know why people wear metallic
 bows in their hair.
I don't know why people fall in love.
I *detest* THE LIMITED!!!
I hate skiing in Switzerland.
I love Lou Reed with a passion.
I love Union Square.
I love going places I'm not supposed to.
I used to love Haiti, but now I don't.
I've lost one contact so now I can only see
 out of one eye.
I've lost more cigarette lighters and
 earrings that I can ever count.
I'm looking for an Edie Sedgewick
 T-shirt.
I'm looking for loads and loads of
 lovely money.
And my heart is a fortress on a
 high rocky hilltop.

*First Place, Poetry
Muse Contest*



Pencil Drawing by Charla Smith

SUNBEAM AND THE THREE GURUS

(A Parody)

by Charla Monique Smith

Once upon a time when I was young and filled with various intellectual yet nonsensical ideas, I came to a point where I looked for some deeper meaning in the entire realm of things, particularly in my life. At this point I felt as if everything around me was falling to pieces. It was right after I had broken up with Ramone; actually, he had just dumped me for some chick named Mardou and I had moved in with his best friend Yuri. I was depressed about the whole situation and just about everything else in my life. One day I decided to wander out into the woods and get stoned, for that is what I always do when I get depressed. That's when the most bizarre event in my life occurred. This strange happening even surpassed the time when I went to bed in Nevada and woke up in Amsterdam four days later.

Well anyway, this is how it all started. I was walking along in the woods smoking my fresh Tijuana imports in my new Authentic Oriental Peace and Harmonic Bowl when I came across this psychedelic shack up the road: one side painted a soft pink and trimmed in yellow, another side painted a baby blue and trimmed in hot pink, and another side painted a bright orange and purple. The front of the house was painted with a huge peace sign in all of the colors of the rainbow. This was a really funky-looking place so I decided to check it out and see if I could meet the folks who were renting it. As I knocked on the door a sense of trepidation ran down my spine, but my deep intellectual curiosity kept me going ahead. No one answered. The drugs must have been taking their effect for I kept hearing the voice of Mister Goodvibes calling me to enter, relax, and make myself at home. I was then overtaken by a portentous sense of paranoia. I ignored it. It must have been the drugs.

As I entered, I noticed a sign in the foyer that read "May Peace, Love, Understanding, and Good Karma come to all who enter this domain." The interior of the house was painted in the same manner and colors as its exterior. There were two flowered orange and yellow love seats placed side by side at one end of the room and placed opposite to them was a multi-colored striped couch. Indian tapestry hung on the walls. Also on the walls were tie-dyed sheets and posters of favorite contemporaries such as Miles Davis, the Monk (Thelonious Monk), and John Coltrane. It was a relatively small pad,

for the kitchen and rap quarters (living room) were directly adjacent to one another and had no dividers.

I decided to check out the kitchen, particularly the fridge, for I was starting to get the munchies. All they had in the icebox were some All Natural Mountain Springwater Beer, Organic Seaweed Sprouts, and Muncho-Nunchos. The food must have reacted with the drugs, for a sudden nervous fit overtook my otherwise mellow and sedate composure and I was led by a curious desire to check out all of the novelties and paraphernalia laying about the house. Mr. Goodvibes was talking to me again.

Indulging my conscious intellectual curiosity as well as just being plain nosy, I came across three bowls on the coffee table, and to my pleasant surprise they were all filled. Seeing that I had misplaced mine for the time being, I decided to try them out. The first one had the name Big Daddio imprinted on it. It was pretty potent stuff and a bit too harsh for my lungs. After gasping for breath, I tried the medium-sized one marked Cool Mama. It was a little too bland for my taste. It had no flavor or kick to it (probably too many seeds). Now the third one was marked Little Karma, and it was just right. It was unadulterated and had no fillers, just pure organic stuff. It also had a nice hickory flavor to it.

By then I was really intoxicated, inebriated, and quite indisposed. I needed a place to crash. I wandered upstairs and found three different-sized bean bags placed around a large people-skinned rug. The first one, the largest one, was dark blue and had Big Daddio written across it. When I sat in it, I felt like I was sitting on electric Mexican jumping beans. That was quite painful. I then moved down to the medium-sized bag marked Cool Mama. It was covered with bright red and orange flowers. When I sat in it, I felt as if I was being swallowed up by a huge blob of Jello. Then I strolled on down to Little Karma's bean bag. It was purple and covered in polka dots. It was the most comfortable reclining and resting device I have ever experienced. It was filled with warm water and had an electric wave maker. It gave me the effect of being stoned on the high seas. That is where I passed out.

A couple of hours passed before the family returned. When I regained consciousness, there (standing before

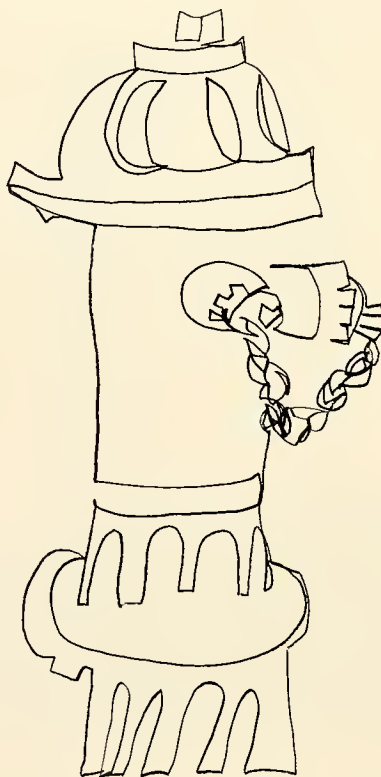
me) were these three hairy but hip bears. They were the Bearu family. They were a family of Transcendental Meditating Gurus who had just returned from their two month meditation-in-seclusion. Big Daddio had long wavy hair, green-tinted John Lennon glasses, sandals, a white Nehru jacket and striped bell-bottoms. Cool Mama was dressed in a long, purple, tie-dyed frock with a matching wrap-around fringed skirt and brown moccasins. Little Karma was not so little after all; in fact, he was about my age. He stood barefoot in cut-off jeans and a tie-dyed tee-shirt. He was extremely handsome and had nice legs. There they all were, standing around me and staring. Somehow I explained my situation and weasled my way

out of the whole mess. The Bearus were pretty cool about the whole thing and even invited me to dinner and a smoke session. We all talked and really got in touch with one another. I moved out of Syd's place and in with them a week later.

EPILOGUE

After Sunbeam moved in with the Bearus, she and Karma fell in love, moved into a place of their own, had four children named Moonglow, Aquarius, Harmony, and Ralph, and later got married. They are now living happily ever after as corporate executives in the tax-sheltered world of Yuppiedom; they are also driving BMWs.

THE END



Pencil Drawing by Elizabeth Grine

YOU WERE WEARING (A Parody)

Dawn DeBruhl

You were wearing your Harley Davidson tee
shirt.
In each torn hole there was a tattoo of various
barmaids.
Your hair was black and you were greasy. You
asked me, "Do you think these chains are too
much?"
I smelled the mould of your smelly Roach Motel
on your hair, tied back with a grimy rubberband.
"No," I said, "the more you have the better."
Then we read *Motorbikes* together
and roughed up some punks, so that a silver
spur was knocked off my Dingo, Classic Hell's
Angels boots.

My old lady was walking in the living room,
her Haight-Ashbury bandanna in her hair.
We waited for a minute and then joined her,
only to be poured beers in mugs with pictures
of Ozzy Osbourne,
As well as with illustrations from his album
Bark at the Moon.
My old man came in wearing his Easy Rider
necktie: "How about a drink, you guys?" I
said, "Let's go outside a while." Then we
sauntered into the front yard and sat in the
greased porch swing.
You sat on the termite-infested part, and I
sat on the dust-covered part.
In the yard across the street we saw my
brother clutching his fibercast helmet bashed
into the likeness of James Dean.



Pencil Drawing by Jo Jo Allred

THE MURAL

by Susan Sommers

I had just poured myself a glass of white wine. As I swirled it around, the ice danced while the clear liquid formed a slow whirlpool. I sipped it, enjoying the sapor of California grapes, and my whole body relaxed. I was resting on three big goosedown pillows, listening to the messages on my answering machine. Three years ago, when I was twenty-four, I bought a small warehouse, moved in on the second floor and opened an art gallery below. There was a back room which I made my bedroom and the rest was filled with easels and included a bar/kitchen area. The pillows, phone, answering machine, and a few magazines and wine glasses decorated the center of this spacious room. I was doing a mural on one wall. It had been the center of my attention and a source of personal relief for the past nine months, as I had just finished one of my largest gallery shows. The mural, although only half-painted, depicted warm sand, singing sea oats, and the undulation of the afternoon ocean. It was a sight all too familiar to me. But something was lacking. It seemed as though my brush was handicapped by some missing feeling.

The sun no longer beamed through the sky lights as the afternoon was finding its way to evening. Wind blew through the crack in the window next to the fire escape. Sensing its playfulness, I chased it out to the escape and positioned myself between the cold, black iron bars. I wished to find the crisp, clean air I used to find at the beach. But New York's air was corrupt, and I could feel the evil presence of its filth. The pollution became a physical growth that was seeping its way through my clothes, hunting my tender skin. I went back inside, lit a cigarette, and nestled myself into the pillows. When I closed my eyes, I slipped into my own silent occupation, my own companionable silence. For once, the menacing traffic below was not chanting its annoying monotone. I was as congruous as a fetus silently floating in its mother's womb. I envisaged Nickolas and Catherine bonded within our mother. They were touching, as if communicating, in that special Gemini language, connected with the common cord of subsistence and the inner knowledge that they would always be close, even at the end.

Nick and Cat were identical twins. They had had midnight-blue eyes and chalky-blonde hair. They were born when I was seven and I loved them with compassion and fervor.

We were a prominent family in eastern North Carolina. We lived in a nice residential area with streets lined with the shade and shelter of great trees. We had been enrolled in private schools since pre-school. We went to church every Sunday, and then to brunch at our country club. Mom always had plenty of snacks for us after school. When the cartoon hour was over, we ventured into our

backyard; it was the neighborhood playground. The three of us were called "The Swiss Family Robinson" because we had a completely furnished treehouse (minus heat and air-conditioning) that stood twenty feet above the ground. There was a bedroom with a bunkbed and a living/dining room with a Betty Crocker microwave, a play stove, a cabinet stocked full of pans and tea sets, and a cardboard refrigerator. The dining table seated four and was always set with place mats and plates. Nick and Cat were always married and reserved the only china set for their places.

Our family spent every summer at our beach cottage in Pawley's Island, South Carolina. We bought the house the year I was seven and my brother and sister were born. If it was raining at the beach, we would stay inside and play "Old Maid" or checkers or do puzzles. When I had to do my summer reading for school, Nick and Cat would lay on the floor and fill in the blank spaces in coloring books with their shoe box full of crayons and magic markers. We always welcomed sunny days with bright morning smiles over Frosted Flakes and orange juice. Then we would put on our swim suits and gather our sand castle "building equipment" (pails, cups, spoons, and shovels) and pile them in the middle of the biggest beach towel. I carried the bundle to the beach, and Nick and Cat brought the rafts. Then Nick ventured into the dunes for stray sea oats that had been broken off by the wind. Cat's job was to collect the prettiest and biggest shells to adorn their castle (she pretended that they were rare and expensive jewels). Cat was queen of the castle and Nick was king and I was the evil dragon who tried to steal the "jewels." After they finished their castle, we invented games to play. They grabbed the "jewels" and I chased them into the surf. Their favorite part was when they had paddled out past the waves on their rafts (their ships). I submerged under water and swam up under their rafts and pinched their feet and then overturned them, sinking their ships. We always thought up new fairytales and I never outgrew playing games with them. We never missed a summer until the accident happened when they were fifteen.

* * * * *

The combination of wine and fatigue must have knocked me out because when I woke, the sun had set and New York City was once again illuminated by the millions of constellations of lights. I had dreamed that Nick and Cat were still alive and that our happy family was once again preparing to go to the beach for the summer. It was one of those dreams that seemed so real that when you wake up, for a split second you truly believe it is real. That scared me and I did not like that eerie feeling that iced my entire body, that feeling of being utterly alone.

I decided to take a break, get out of the city, relax. I needed a good two weeks to emotionally cleanse and

refresh myself before I confronted nightmarish images and memories from my past.

At dawn I packed my car with old jeans, cotton shirts, sweatshirts, watercolors and a pad, and groceries (which included three half-gallons of white Chablis). It would be a good two days travel on lonesome highways. But this is a comfort I enjoy.

The deaths of my brother and sister continually haunted me and strained every nerve in my body. It was even evident in my art work. My parents scrutinized me and used the twins' death to emotionally penalize me. They pretended I was dead most of the time. I was a bothersome and listless piece of lint that had flown into their eye. Their marriage was destroyed by the loss of their twins. They were emotionally drained and had become numb towards me, and gradually towards the bond and vows they once shared. The year after it happened they were divorced, and I moved to New York at the age of twenty-two. Since then, we have not talked in four years. The only communication between us was left on my answering machine by my mother two years ago. It said, "This is your mother, Elizabeth. I got married three months ago. My name is now Martha Robinson Smith." Click. Not even the slightest echo of love existed after the twins' death.

The warm sun coming directly through my sunroof comforted me and gave me confidence. Then it grew and the evening darkness closed like an eyelid over the world. I, too, would soon be able to enter a pattern of sleep. I decided on the next motel.

The next day's drive proved to be invigorating as I celebrated the South's familiar sights and smells. By night, though, it began to rain. By the time I reached the South Carolina island, exhaustion won the battle over emotion. But instinct became the driver, and soon I opened my eyes and found myself in front of the most frightening apparition I had ever witnessed. My lights cut through the pouring rain like swords, and what materialized in front of my unexpecting eyes was an unmasking of the ghost of my childhood. Even though this house bore no resemblance to the one that was once named "Undertow," it was the same house. I could not bear the sight of that boarded-up creature. I felt abandoned and unwelcomed. I drove away.

Spanish moss usually adds to the character of the swamp lands of South Carolina, but this time I only saw them as other signs of demons that were watching me. The long, grey clumps of hair now only reminded me of lanky spiders that infested, not complemented, the beach. The windsong even changed key. The breezes from the coast no longer whistled through the trees as they used to when they sounded like chimes and canticles. Instead, the wind howled through the dark trees like a pack of wolves during a chilling snow in a haunted forest. I shuddered at that image.

I finally discovered a small motel and decided that I needed a long rest. I needed both physical and emotional stamina for the next day.

I woke up at three o'clock and drove to our house that reminded me the night before of the Amityville Horror. First things first. Fix the sign and tear down those

damned dismal boards. The tools were in the playroom below the house. I unlocked the door and was again taken by a chilling sight. In one corner were our inner tubes, rafts, and kites. In the other was my old ten-speed and then two red bikes. They each had miniature license plates that we got from cereal boxes: one read "Nick" and the other read "Cat." I was trying to guard myself against beach memories as I went to the cabinet and got the tool box and a ladder. It took me an hour and a half to destroy those barriers which, in turn, destroyed the life of our house. The door creaked as I pushed it open. I stood back, hoping no phantom bats would fly out and rip open my jugular. The light from the setting sun beamed through the dust, just as my lights had sliced through the rain the night before. As I walked through the house, I felt a weird, unexplainable presence, much stronger than the common fear that someone is either watching or following you. As I stepped, I could feel the dust of five years rise around my ankles as if to entangle or grab them. I then turned on the fans and opened all the doors and windows. The innocent breezes understood my beckoning as they immediately whistled through the screen porch, weaving themselves through the wicker furniture, and finally entering this house that yearned for its youth again.

The atmosphere began to look and feel refreshed. It was as if it had inhaled the wonderful perfume of that salty mist from its front yard combined with the pungent aroma of dark marsh clay from its back yard. The seagulls also seemed to understand the general feeling of release in the atmosphere as they were laughing and playing their games in the wet sand and surf.

Exhausted, I poured myself a glass of wine. The breezes were getting colder and more brisk as the day ventured into silvery-blue, then yellow-orange, gold-red, then pink laced with blue, then finally that violent yet calming tint of blue, native only to southern nights. The ocean would be at high tide soon and I had not been to the sea yet. I threw on my favorite pair of faded Levi's and a ragged sweatshirt. As soon as I reached the porch, I was hypnotized by the tenderness of the wind and the smell of the night ocean spray. I walked out on our boardwalk to the gazebo, inhaled, and sighed. I had accomplished relaxation and authority over my nightmares and released this house from eternal decay: I would live again and so would it. I saw the last pelican diving through the deep of the night, through the rippling light of the moon on the ocean, taking its last slow-motion dive towards its unsuspecting prey. As I lay in the hammock, the sea oats sang to me a true lullaby.

"Elizabeth, have you seen Nick and Cat?" my mother bellowed down the wooden corridor to my room.

"Come on Mom, they're fifteen. Don't worry, they probably went on a walk or something; they'll be back soon. Oh, by the way, I'm going to the north end to an oyster roast. I'll be home in a few hours."

It was the "middle of the summer" annual party with a bonfire, beach music, kegs, an ocean's worth of roasted oysters, and a bunch of kids. Nick and Cat were going to walk up the beach and meet me later.

I started looking for them after I had been there a

couple of hours. I was not really worried; it was just that they were real excited because this would be the first big party that they were allowed to come to, and it was not like them to be late for anything. Over the laughter and splashing and music, I heard sirens at our end of the island. I thought that it might have been some kids fooling around and that one of them had gotten hurt, but dismissed the thought and went back down on the beach. By then, a crowd of people from the party were pointing to the ocean, down where I had thought I heard the sirens. I ran down to them and saw three coast guard motorboats close to the shore with ten search lights combing the waves. I heard rumors of a drug bust, then that some sailboat had drifted away from the shore, but something worried me. I had this unexplainable feeling real deep inside me. It was different than when you are worried about something; it was physical. I felt this surge of adrenalin shoot through my entire body. The physical gravity of this feeling made my body tingle and feel unbelievably heavy. I felt dizzy. This force was so omnipotent and physically consuming that I felt the horrifying sensation of a nail scratching my heart, then along my veins until it found the most tender pinpoints of my most sensitive nerves, and then pricked at them. This thrust through my body was so piercing and biting and vehement that I felt nauseated. I ran inside and fell knees first in front of the toilet. I splashed my face with cold water and looked in the mirror; I was deathly pale. I wanted and needed to be in *my* house, so I drove home. There were two police cars parked askew in our dark, sandy driveway. "What the hell is going on?" I scratchily screamed to myself. My throat had become swollen and parched. I banged on my steering wheel in confused disbelief. I ran past the outdoor showers to the boardwalk, through the gazebo, and lost all balance as I tried to stand. There were now many more motorboats scouring the coast for about a half a mile south. They were all dredging the ocean bottom with nets, and there were lights flashing and blinking so that my eyes began to feel as if they were being forced through their sockets to the back of my skull. I turned and saw tall, sturdy figures moving about inside the house. The next thing I knew, my head was buried in my mother's chest. She was patting my hair with her pale hands, whispering, "It's all right, baby." My father was sitting in his rocker, totally silent and still. I could tell from the position of his grey eyes that his mind had travelled too distantly to be reached. He did not even notice my presence. The tall officer's features were blurred by my tears and the incomprehensible emotional state I was in. I heard him mutter something like, "They'll keep at it, ma'am, until mornin'." By then the

neighbors stood on the porch and the wind carried their whispering gossip to the room. "You bet, I saw them on that big raft they have, and it was dark." Another woman explained about the undertow that had probably swallowed them.

"How could this be? Nick and Cat were smart," I thought to myself.

I heard the pounding of footsteps down the boardwalk and within seconds a hefty man with a yellow rain suit stood, out of breath, dripping at the officer's feet. He was holding Nick's and Cat's favorite raft.

"We found this about a quarter of a mile down south, about a hundred an' fifty yards out to sea," the man sadly informed us.

I sat up and tried to scream, but could barely breathe. How could this be? Where were they? I tried to run to the beach, but my mother grabbed my hand and the police officer sat me back down.

I jumped and awoke from my deep sleep. The tide was violently rolling and crashing into itself as if trying to break the moon's and nature's powerful grip. The clouds raced violently and the moon tried desperately to escape that caravan of wild, galloping Indians. But the moon was now a prisoner behind a grey wall of turbulence. Lightning cracked the sky as if to tame this wild herd of nature's bandits. It began to rain and I went inside and curled up on the couch with a quilt. I was going home the next day. I could finish my mural.

When I returned to New York, my empty, lonely "room" welcomed me with its own fullness. I began painting, ignoring my exhaustion, and painted through the night. It was a peaceful work of art. It exemplified my release from the nightmares and demons of my past and the fresh, new beginning of my cleansed entity. I stared at it for hours, thinking of nothing, worshipping my new silence. I knocked over my glass of wine and realized that I had totally forgotten to tell anyone of my whereabouts. I turned on my answering machine, nonchalantly listening to the messages. But one voice caught my attention. It was one I had heard in my dream a few nights ago. I re-wound the message and my mother's voice echoed in my room, "Honey, it's your mama, call me at this number . . ."

I could not believe it. I picked up the phone and called her.

"Mom, it's . . ."

"I know," she said in that shaky, yet sturdy voice she had.

"Mom . . ."

"Yes, honey . . ."

"I went to the beach house. Everything's okay."

*Susan Sommers
Second Place, Prose
Muse Contest*



Woodcut by Lisey Wilson

THE DIAMOND

Chrissy Bolin

Bewildering, god-like, dazzling.
The Incas would have surveyed it upon bent
knees.

Ice. Enough to give a whole arm frostbite.
What price would one pay?
A life savings perhaps? And watch the
children starve for

a helping
hand.

*Third Place, Poetry
Muse Contest*

PREY

Ainsley Cardinal

I can see them clearly
through the glass that envelopes me
like a cocoon.
No sound penetrates the barrier.
I only see the motion of their mouths,
so enjoyably angry that each
word stretches their jaws
like rubber bands.
Their hands reach out, their palms pressing
flat against the glass.
Zap, zap. Threads of shimmering light
pierce their hands; I leave them
stained with blood.
They crawl away still hungry,
still bleeding,
still searching.



"Faces" by Lynn Cowell



PEOPLE OF THE NIGHT

Jo Jo Allred

They're lurking in the shadows
You can't see them in the light
With smoky hair and smoky eyes
They're the people of the night

Their names are in the papers
And doormen know their faces
As they saunter past the waiting crowds
Into most unusual places

Cigarettes and pallor
And sunglasses in the dark
They lounge about in corners
Waiting to make their mark.

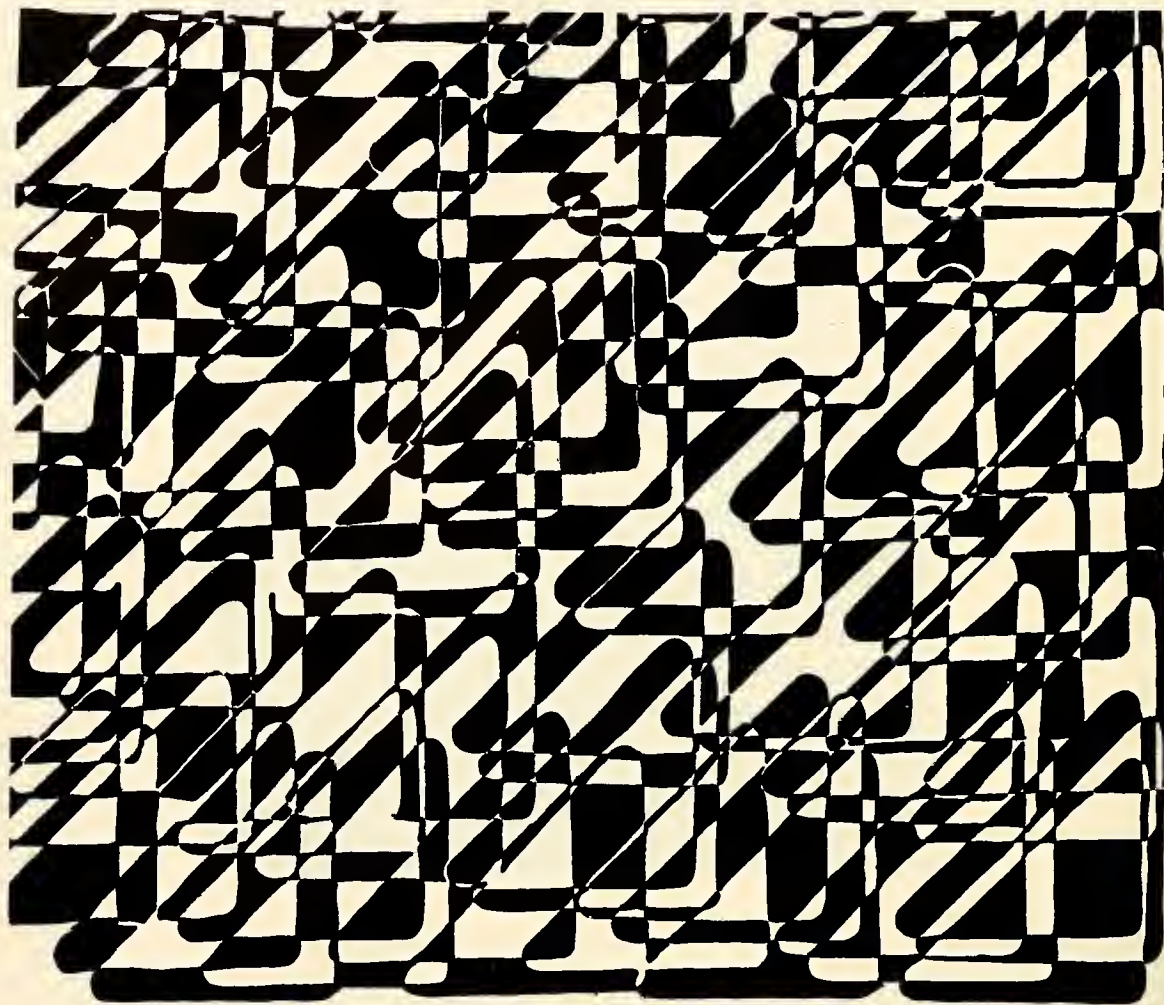


Photograph by Caroline Stephenson

CHILDISH PASTIMES

Ginger Latta

I have seen young children turning princes into frogs,
seen the glee on their young faces as their poison-
tipped darts hit home,
watched them weave their sticky webs of words,
trap their victims and suck them dry.
After the precious blood of confidence is gone
and the young predators have turned to other prey,
lifeless husks remain.



*Pen and Ink Drawing
by Amy Booth*

THE SHATTERING

by Sara Goodwin

Jane was my favorite friend in the entire world. I would say best friend, but I only saw her for three weeks each summer when I visited my grandmother in Virginia. The three-hour drive seemed an eternity because I was so excited about seeing Jane and experiencing the freedom of the country.

From arrival to departure, Jane and I spent every waking moment together. You know, spending the night with each other, going on picnics that her mother seemed to love fixing us, and spending endless hours sitting in her treehouse pretending that we were Indians. That was our favorite game. With my imagination and Jane's mischievousness, we were an unbeatable pair. We were brave Indian boys with many daily quests. Our country setting was perfect for our game. We ran through the fields, pretending we were riding horses. We caught tadpoles in the creek and watched them evolve into frogs through the glass walls of a peanut-butter jar. We were tough. No one could tell an Indian what to do. Jane and I proved this by breaking the neighbors' rabbit traps. Animals were friends to Indians. We set loose a dozen chickens because the man who owned them yelled at us to get off his property.

"You girls get the hell outta here." He was swaying from side to side. Jane and I wondered what was wrong with him. We did not want to waste any time finding out, though. We ran fast to our safe refuge, the treehouse. As I was straining up the final limb and settling on the sturdy wood, Jane was mumbling obscenities about the man who smelled like my Dad's after-dinner drink.

"Coligia (that was my Indian name), nobody can tell us what to do, remember that. Payback is hell. . .," Jane said. I remembered alright. Thoughts of revenge were racing through my mind. After a moment of gazing up through the pines, I vaguely remembered the clucking of chickens in the silent moment after the swaying man yelled at us and before we ran.

"We will sneak up behind the chicken coop under the bushes; I will open the hatch and you kick the cage to scare them!" I had the ideas and Jane plotted the rest. The plan worked to perfection and we ran away, laughing hysterically.

The next day we decided it would be best to stay as far away from the chickens as possible. This led us to venture down the dirt road and pet the horses behind the fence which outlined the road.

"Maybe we will even steal one; then us brave Indians can ride whenever we want," Jane confided. I readily agreed, because I was the one with the yearning to ride fast and far. Since we were feeling so powerful lately, we probably would have done it if we had not been side-tracked.

It all started when we were leaning on the fence,

straining on bare toes to feel the horses' soft noses. Our feet were a gray color from walking on the dirt road which farm trucks had smoothed and flattened. Our shoulders and faces were tanned from the summer sun and we were wearing our usual attire: tank-tops and faded, cut-off Levis. I was so preoccupied with the horses that a war could have taken place ten feet away and I would not have noticed. I looked over at Jane and she was talking softly to her brown-speckled horse. "Pretty horsey, don't you want to come home with me? We could be friends forever."

I looked back to my short black pony and bent down to pick some grass outside the fence that his straining neck could not quite reach. That was when the hair on the back of my neck stood up and I felt a cold chill pass through my body. I knew it was a warning that something was not quite right, but I did not know what. I had never experienced this sixth-sense before, because I never had anything to be scared of. I looked at Jane to see if she felt it also, but she was still talking sweetly to her horse. I began to look around to find something that was different about the horses. They still had a soft look in their eyes, so I knew they were not ready to kick or bite. I looked again, thinking there might be a snake coiled up ready to strike my bare leg. I turned slowly around and for some reason my eyes rested on a small, dumpy-looking house settled inconspicuously back in the woods. Jane and I had been at this fence almost every day for the past two weeks and never before had we noticed this house.

"Hey Jane, take a look at that house." She turned around and her clear blue eyes searched the woods until she found it.

"I never noticed that house before," Jane said mysteriously.

I read her curious, naive mind and walked across the road to get a closer look. With Jane by my side, I ventured slowly through the overgrown lawn. A thorn scratched my leg and I stopped to inspect it.

"It's just a scratch, come on," Jane said. As I raised my eyes back to the house, I noticed a man's face peering out a dirty window. He was so still I knew he had been there for a while. His body was not visible. It was as if he was resting on his knees, staring at us. Watching us.

"Jane, why is he looking at us like that?" I innocently inquired.

"Maybe he wants to come out and pet the horses, too." I looked into her clear eyes and decided my weird feeling was just stupid.

But Jane was the one who walked up the wooden steps onto the porch. Suddenly the door opened and the man emerged. He was younger than my father but older than my brother. I wondered what he was like and why he only wore a pair of jeans. No shirt, no shoes. Did he know

his pants were unbuttoned in the front? Then Jane interrupted my thoughts.

"Do you want to pet the horses with us?" He got a funny smile on his face and bent down like someone who was trying to coax a dog into coming close enough to pet.

"What are you doing?" Jane asked.

Since I was standing directly behind Jane at the bottom of the steps, I had to move slightly to my left to see what the man was doing. He had his hand down the front of his pants. Jane was standing there with her head cocked to the side, waiting for an answer to her question. Another chill passed through me.

"Come on Jane, he doesn't want to play with us," I said.

"Okay." It was said almost too simply and bluntly to be coming from Jane's mouth.

As she was skipping down the steps, he lunged forward and caught her arm. In a quick motion he flung Jane's small body into the house. She fell on her side but sat up quickly. I turned and ran full speed toward the road. He caught me halfway there. Jane was screaming as he carried me toward the house. I told her to run as I flailed to get loose. He threw me on the floor beside Jane where she still sat. She had not moved, but her mouth was wide open and allowing a half-cry, half-scream to escape. He immediately covered her mouth with his dirty hand as he kicked the door shut.

"If yer boyfriend makes a sound, I'll hurt ya real bad." He rubbed the back of her jeans gently.

He thought I was a boy. What was he doing to Jane?

My thoughts were racing endlessly as he laid her down on the hard floor. He buried his face in her long, strawberry-blonde hair and caressed her arms and face.

I do not know how long it was that he lay on top of her, only moving slightly, but something inside my heart broke. It was beyond sadness; I guess one could call it despair. When he finally stood up, Jane did not move. I went over to her and pulled her to her feet. With her eyes cast downward, she listened submissively to his threats.

"Don't ya'll go back and tell yer folks, or I'll kill ya next time. Don't worry, I'll find you."

So we turned slowly and simply walked out the door. With neither one of us looking back, we continued down the road. No laughter, no cartwheels, no brave Indians. I looked at Jane and her eyes were vacant, yet suspicious. Just like mine. I knew neither one of us would ever tell.

Minutes later we found ourselves sitting in the treehouse. Jane scratched the date in the bark with a pocket knife I had stolen from my brother. The date was the only thing carved in the tree except our Indian names, Coligia and Eligia.

When I left that summer, we vowed to one another never to tell anyone our secret. Until this day, I have never mentioned a word of it. My youthful innocence left that summer with my suitcases. Jane's blue eyes never looked quite as clear and believing anymore. Instead of playing "brave Indians" we played "sly Indians," running on cautious horses. And instead of always looking ahead, we caught ourselves glancing back over our shoulders.

*Sara Goodwin
Honorable Mention, Prose
Muse Contest*



Pencil Drawing by Laurie Chase

RUNAWAY

Lei Zimmerman

I walk the streets,
Wet asphalt,
red smog
slung against
the side of a
skyscraper paves the way
home.

Runaway,
Strobes, neon brights,
enhance the mechanical
sway of a skin-tight
leather mini, as she
clips along the painted
slabs of
sidewalk.

Dangers,
Soiled in tattered
jeans and ripped T-shirts
lurk in store-clustered
windows. And following
them is the click-click of the
cue on eight
balls.

I walk the streets,
The yellow
eyes of alleys lurk,
grabbing, seizing
the chill.
Cats cry, hungry as belly
empty children.
The city's heat
rises from the pavement,
the blood red sky
sinks to earth.

*Second Place, Poetry (Tie)
Muse Contest*



Pencil Drawing by Lei Zimmerman

BROKEN WINGS

by Lei Zimmerman

It was mid-January, and there was a slight nip from the ice-chilled breeze; the sun was a bright glare fighting hard to overcome the 42 degree temperature. I stood inside the M-A-R-T-A station's terminal where the cold air seeped down through the dim misty tunnels. I wasn't much on patience, and I wanted to hurry home as quickly as I could. A train screeched to a halt, the air compressors opening and closing doors. As I boarded the train, I patted the back pocket of my jeans to check on my wallet, and took a seat; now I was on my way back to the depths of Atlanta's inner city slums.

I quietly walked up the three flights of stairs. Each of the old half-rotten planks moaned painfully under my feet; the cracked walls creaked as the building settled into the idea that I was now home, and that there was no need to worry. A falling piece of wall covering sighed and sulked from the wall, trying to relax from the plastered grip of glue. I stopped at the landing before the third flight of stairs, and leaning against the railing, I noticed that the banister was unsteady. I pulled up on the rail and the long thin poles slipped smoothly from their holes. I pounded my fist down on the rail and everything jumped back into place. Then I went up to the third floor where our apartment was. The hall was long, dark, and narrow. The only sound that spilled into the hall was the loud rumbling of a television from our apartment. I crept slowly down the hall, being careful not to step on the drunks who had passed out there. The television grew louder. I stood facing the door, then reached for the doorknob. I knew the picture. Dad would be sitting in his big-cushioned chair in front of the television set with his old jeans on, in his tight t-shirt with rolled-up sleeves. His hair would either be all wet or greased back. Sometimes he would be smoking a cigarette, but most of the time he was just passed out with beer. The two years that he'd been out of a job had really begun to tell on his relationship with Mom. They were always fighting these days. Mom was a lot like him. She was hot-headed and never gave in to his rages. It seemed that after a big fight, all Mom wanted was for Dad to love her, but when she showed any kind of affection towards him he would always hit her. I guess I loved both my parents, at least I used to. Only now I just felt sorry for Mom and nothing else. Maybe I did care. When I was around, Dad hardly ever yelled at her, but when they were in their own room with the door shut, all hell would break loose. Finally, I opened the door; it squeaked loudly. I walked into the main room. It was dark except for the glare of the television set. Beer cans lay scattered all around the chair, but Dad wasn't there. I thought maybe he'd gone down the block to play billiards or something. I looked down the

small interior hall before me, which led to the bedrooms and bath. The door at the very end of the hall was closed, but light seeped underneath the door and I could make out the black movements of shadows. The shower was running in the bathroom. I could just make out the sounds of enraged voices over the racket of the television.

"When in the hell did you earn the right to tell me to shut up?" I heard Dad shout.

"The first time I got off my bum and got three jobs to support this screwed-up family! That's when," Mom shouted back.

"I'm the one who supports my family . . ." Dad was saying with a quiet force that was engulfed by the cheers of football fans. God, I couldn't believe it, but then yes, I most certainly could. I went into the kitchen. Opening the rusted refrigerator door, I grabbed up a left-over sandwich with soggy bread, and sneaked a beer from one of Dad's many six-packs. Then I headed back down the hall to my room. I could have done my homework, but instead I gulped down both the sandwich and the beer. Lying across the single-bed on my stomach, I watched the bugs circling around the old crooked floodlight which hung just outside my window. I wanted to get to sleep, wanted to forget about the voices on the other side of the wall. It grew later. Time passed. I fell in and out of sleep. Sometimes I would break out in a cold sweat and would find myself staring up at the ceiling emptily. I heard the door slam, and the familiar sound of Dad's backhanding my Mom. Then there were only her wild sobs. I hated him. I couldn't take it anymore. Water ran from my eyes, down my cheeks, and I could make out the salty taste of tears. I wanted Mom to be free. I wanted to break free from everything; maybe I would.

* * * * *

The sun rose from the corner of the window. Purple clouds of sunrise hit my eyes. I rolled over onto my side, mumbling to myself as I always do when I first wake up. The apartment was quiet, but I knew that wouldn't last long when Dad came back. He always went out for a walk after he hit Mom. He was probably passed out in some other woman's bed anyway. I knew this was true; he told Mom once that he had. I was thinking too much. I went out into the hall.

I could hear Mom trying to talk to Dad. She kept hollering at him, but he wasn't listening. Then I heard that deadly silence. She had switched off the television. My head was buzzing and wouldn't slow down. I ran to the hall entrance just in time to catch Dad's rage.

"What the hell ya do that for?" he hollered, holding up a beer can to the television set.

"You aren't listenin' to me, Johnny!" Mom shouted.

"You never listen to me."

"Well, I'm sure as hell listenin' now," Dad said. "So shoot."

"Did you sleep with her last night?" Mom asked.

"Sleep with who? Jane?" Dad questioned. "Sleep with who?"

"That girl you told me about," Mom said, now crying.

"Yes, Goddamnit, I most certainly did!" Dad shouted.

He stood up from the chair, and in his anger threw the beer can against the wall. Beer spattered everywhere and ran down the soiled wall covering.

"You son of a bitch!" Mom shouted. In her anger she jumped Dad and started to beat him. He laughed hysterically at her, liking every minute of it. He picked her up and threw her against the wall and started to slap her hard. She took every lick like a man, and didn't even shed a tear. I stood there in the doorway scared to death, but the more he hit her the angrier I became. I couldn't hold myself together anymore. I ran across the room and jumped on his back. Throwing my arms around his broad neck, I started pulling back as hard as I could. I was doing it; I was choking my own father. I wanted to kill him. His air started to leave him. Dad was trying frantically to save himself from my grip. He reached up with his strong hands and grabbed me by the hair. He pulled hard, and I cried out, letting go of him. Then he shoved me across the room. I hit my head against the dinner table, and was knocked cold.

It was early evening when I found myself in a heap underneath the dinner table; my head ached and the back of my neck felt as if it had been split in two. I slowly pulled myself up on my feet, and being unsteady, held onto the back edge of the sofa. Mom sat there huddled in a corner of the sofa. She held a cushion tightly in her arms, and cried while her eyes stared off somewhere beyond where I stood. The apartment door stood wide open; a dim light from the dingy hall seeped onto the brown carpet. Dad was gone. I wanted desperately to sit there beside Mom and hold her to me, and tell her everything was all right. But instead I ran out into the narrow hall and stormed up the remaining three flights of stairs. I didn't stop until I reached the exit onto the roof. The door was propped open with a wooden milk crate. A yellow light spilled down the stairs and poured over my tired body. Time seemed to stop, and the door drifted farther away from me, flowing forever upward. Out of breath and breathing hard, I finally reached the crack in the door. Pulling the door open, I was greeted by the dark night sky, speckled with a galaxy of stars and a painted-on

moon which lit the roof with moonshine. It was chilly—my teeth chattered. The familiar sounds of fluttering wings and cooing pigeons reached my ears. I pulled out a bag of seed from an old trashcan, and stepped into the homemade coop among the warmth of many winged bodies; I filled all the tin troughs with feed. I even took special care to make sure that the bathing pool had fresh water, and that none of the birds were injured from fights over food. There was a dove in a separate, smaller cage. I had carefully unwrapped the broken wing two weeks earlier. The young bird was now standing in its cage, flexing its delicately feathered appendages, testing its spans. I watched the bird's movements closely, learning the habits of its kind. The bird turned towards me; it stopped flapping, and cocked its small white head at me. The eyes that looked at me were dull and sad; there was no more spirit in them. I lifted it out of the wire cage, pinning the wings back against its cotton-white plumage. Fishing around in a pocket of my jeans, I pulled out a red satin ribbon that had once belonged to Mom. I tied it loosely around the feather-pillow-soft head. I moved over to the roof's edge, and stepped up onto the small ledge. The sidewalk was six stories below me, and there was nothing to keep me where I stood except for balance. I looked down below and could feel myself gradually leaning forward. My foot was dying to take that one last step. I stood there on top of the world; taking a deep breath, I threw up my hands, pushing the dove upward and out. It flapped its delicate, cottony wings then, stunned, started to plummet downward towards the dark empty street. I stood there watching its steady race towards sure death. My heart pounded in my ears. I stiffly stepped back off the wall and knelt there at my brick altar, praying for peace, for Mom, and for a new life. The dove's wings caught a strong upward draft. I watched closely as the bird was suspended, drifting, not really moving any place. Then suddenly it rose, flying out and up into the deep reaches of space. A moonbeam hit the tips of the white wings, forming a tinge of gold across the feathers. The dove flew upward into the clouded domes, the crystal spires of an angelic court. I saw the bird fly into freedom, but there was pain, as if an arrow had lit into my heart, my broken wing. I leaned my bare back against the cold brick wall. There beside me lay a long single white feather. I picked it up gently. Light specks played across it like crystal spheres. I stuck it behind my ear. Somewhere down the block a horn blew, and tires squealed around a corner. A baby cried. A gun exploded in the silence. But I could live now. The dove was free. Mom was free. I was free.

*Lei Zimmerman
Third Place, Prose
Muse Contest*



*Pen and Ink Drawing
by Dena Blount*



Photograph by Ainsley Cardinal

AUTUMN

Dawn DeBruhl

Crisp cinnamon leaves sprinkle from
the sky like confetti,
piling on top of each other on the
hard cold ground.

Like a box of crayons,
they bring delight to small children
who dive in and choose their
favorite ones.

When hanging from branches
they clutter together,
resembling hens or roosters.

Once the season has ended,
all leaves resting lazily on earth,
they look like nothing more than
crushed cereal.

*Honorable Mention, Poetry
Muse Contest*

THE SLUG

Chrissy Bolin

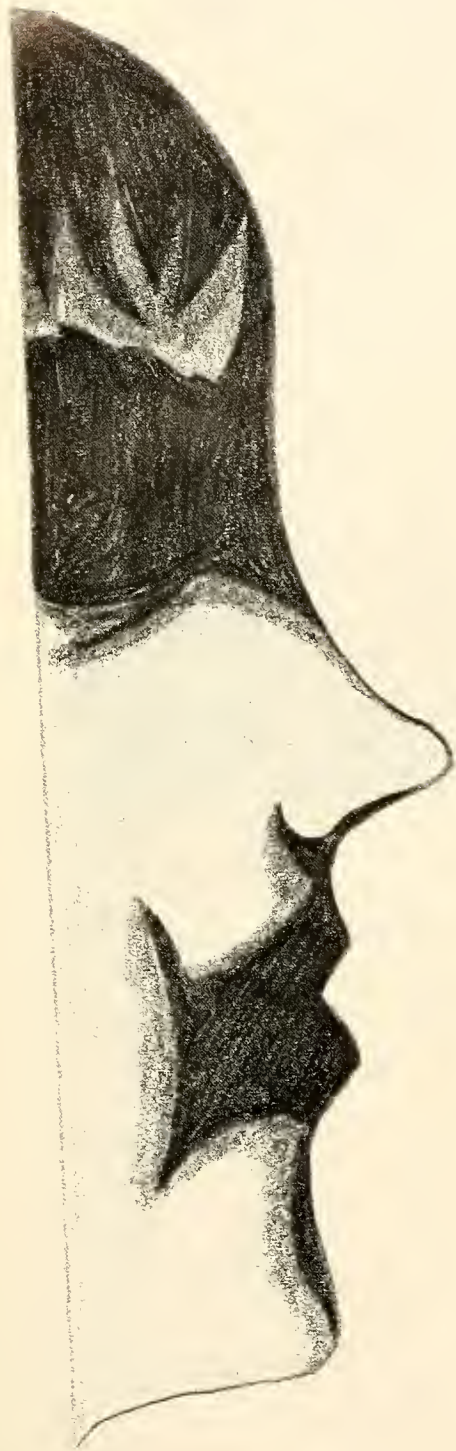
I

Sliming its way across Indian-red bricks,
Smearing silver trails from its belly,
Unseen, except for shimmering hints of moonlight
highlighting its glossy, bean-shaped flesh,
feeling its way into unknown territory, a maverick.

II

The sandpaper child drops minute salt crystals on its tender
back,
an open wound rubbed briskly with alcohol only compares.
If it could scream, it would sound the way it looks now,
Shrinking and expanding, fading into its deathbed of
silver bubbles.

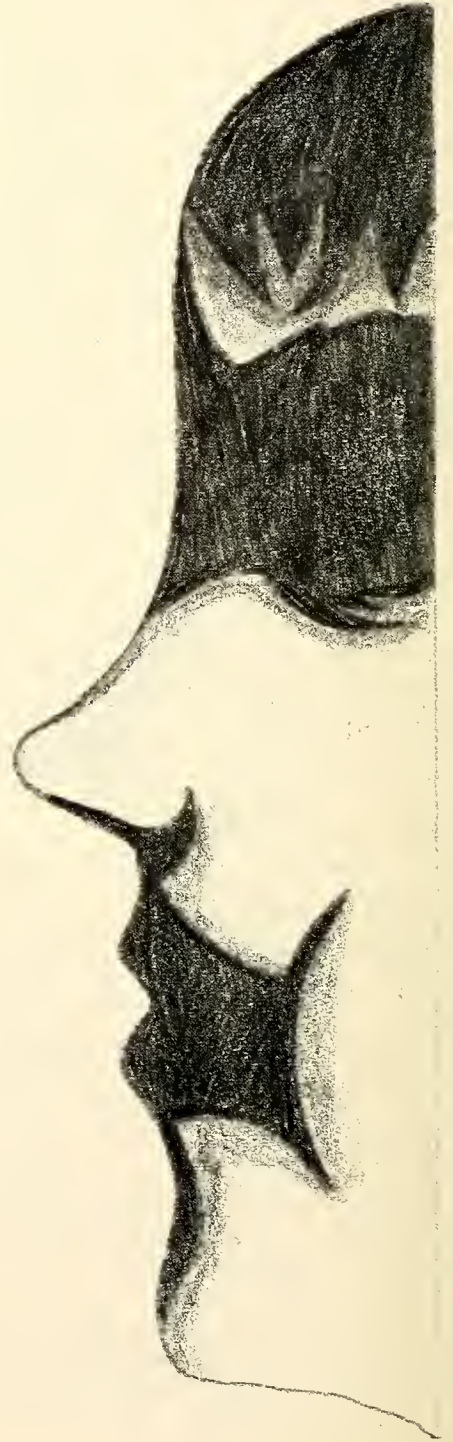
Third Place, Poetry (Tie)
Muse Contest



FACE IS WHAT

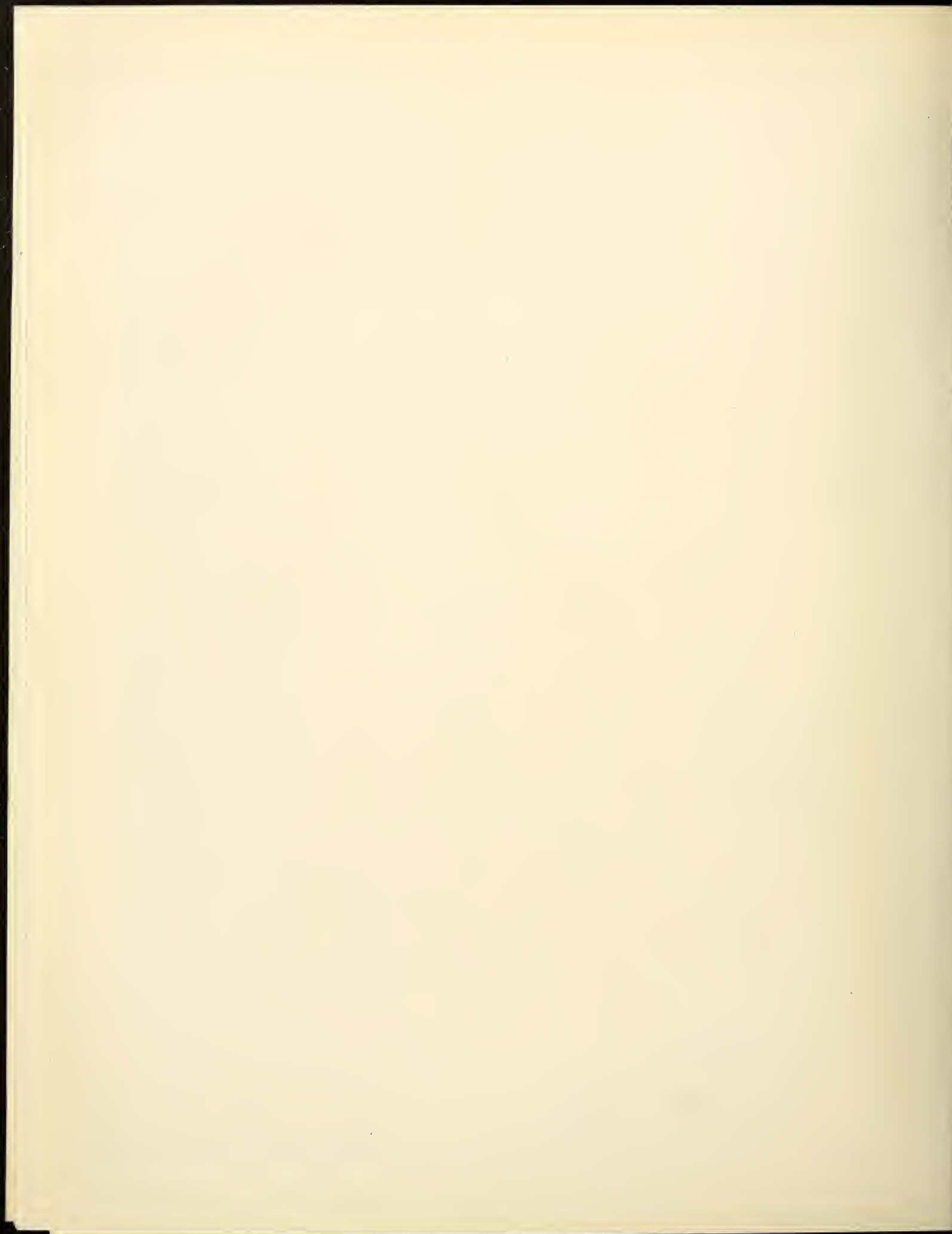
Tom Hawkins

*Face is what
the Japanese
save, what
we do
to the music,
how soldiers
turn, what
mountains
offer
climbers,
what
the clock
shows us,
the twins
of betrayal,
the mirror's
moment,
the facts,
eyes,
the surface
worked
from inside.*



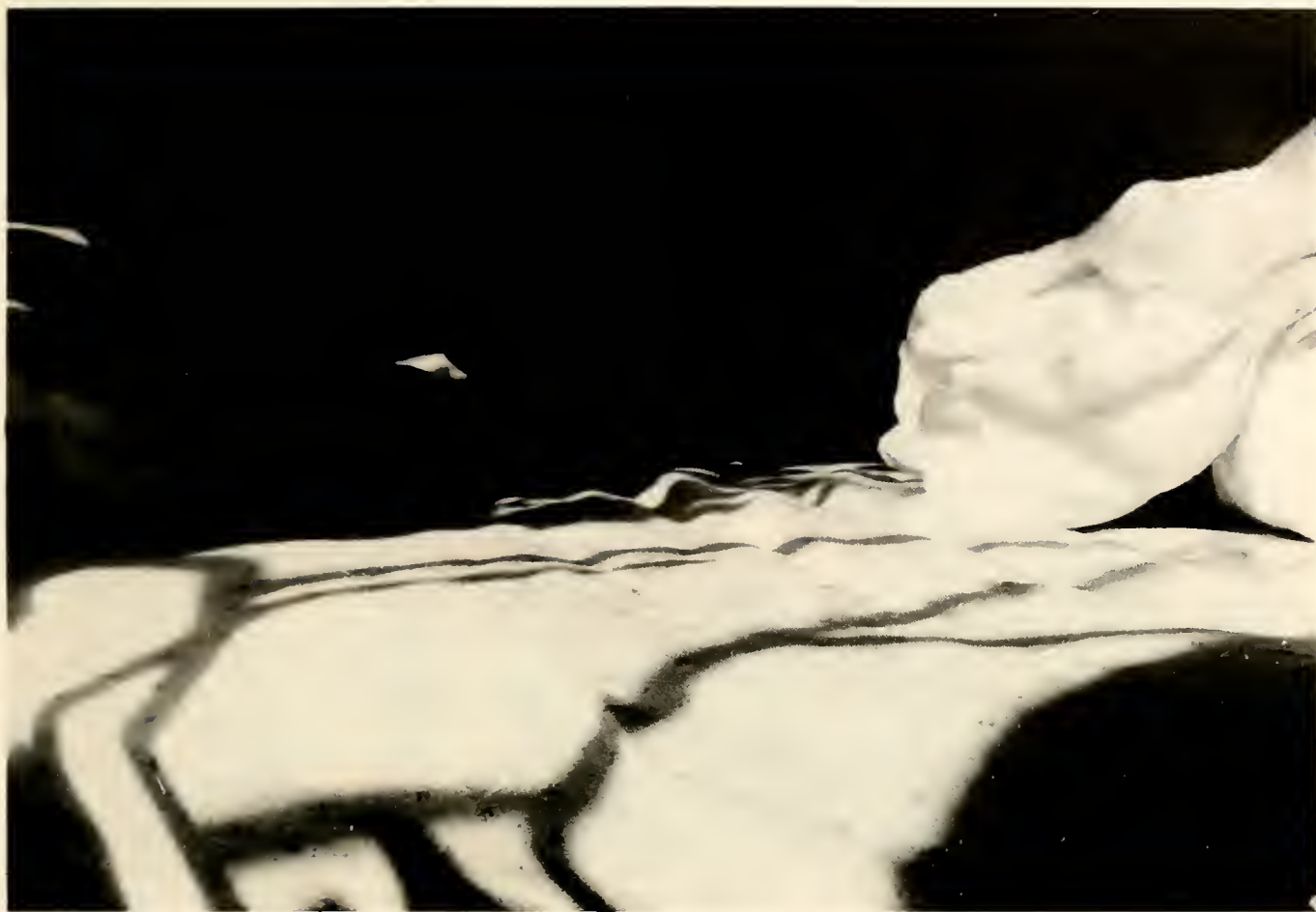
Pencil Drawing by Jamie Allen











*Photograph
by Helen Spruill
First Place, Art, Muse Contest*

*While I am young the air will be filled with shouting,
tasting, kissing. Yes Yes Yes!
When I am old lilacs, driftwood, tides, and sunsets.*

*"Age" by
Emily Kilpatrick*

MUSE 1988
SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE



by Wendy Wortham

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SUSAN KATZ (POETRY)
PEGGY PAYNE (PROSE)

MUSE CONTEST WINNERS

CORNELIA BARNWELL
CELIA DUNN
ELIZABETH LEACH
MARY BETH MANN
COURTNEY O'KELLEY
HELEN SPRUILL
WENDY WORTHAM

MUSE CONTEST HONORABLE MENTIONS

PAISLEY DIETZ
SALLIE THORPE
BETH VAN DORP
JENNIFER WECHSLER
LAURA WYRICK

**Cover Art by Paisley Dietz, Honorable Mention, Art, Muse Contest*

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*Trip Underwater
by Marcia Mooring*

PRISM

Sunday Jan McLean

as many facets
as a schizophrenic looking back
at me.
laughing brightly
at my dullness
with many eyes.
sparkling
with a superior attitude,
throwing my clear world into
confusion.
violently slashing
an image into bits of
brilliant beauty:
This is where envy originates.

CHANGES

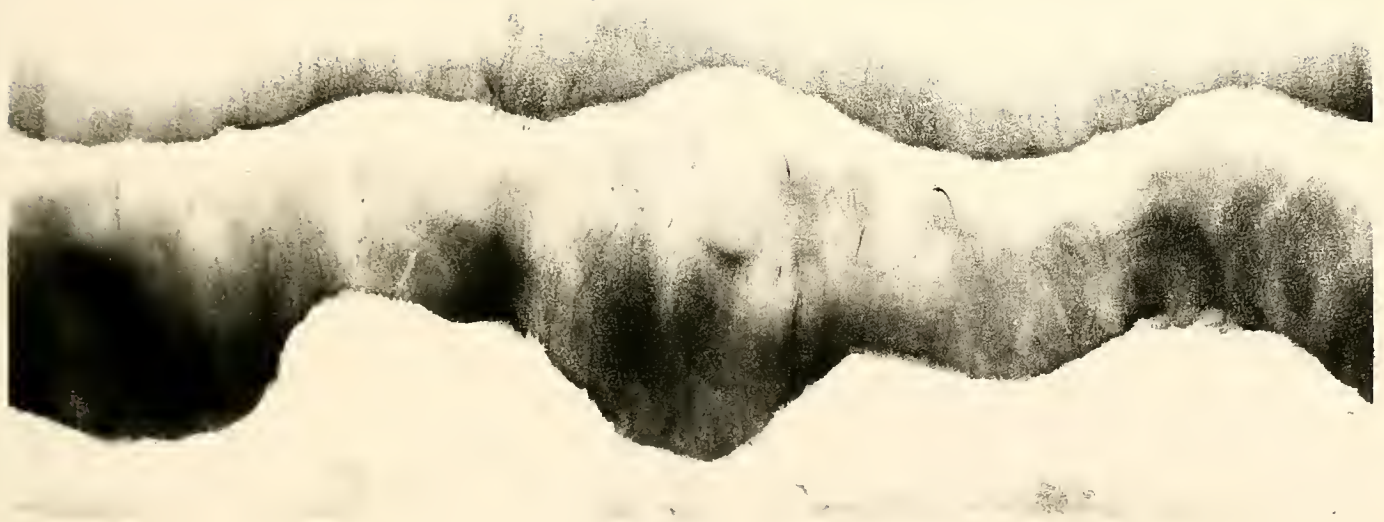
Kelley Piggott

A white piece of canvas,
primed to his perfection,
stretches across the sturdy, hand-carved frame.

Bristles saturated in crimson
flutter to known places.
His wrist dances to
ringing colors of emotion.

The heavy grey
slips through the smooth flow,
the easy swishes of oil.

Mood swings from rust to teal,
splashes of color radiating,
shining through this storm in turmoil.



Elizabeth Leach 1927

*Charcoal Drawing by Elizabeth Leach
Second Place, Art
Muse Contest*

HAIKU

Grasshopper legs leap,
landing, delicate as snow:
a ballerina.

Courtney O'Kelley

Clawing at wet sand
nothing is as strong as the sea
smashing stone like glass.

Cornelia Barnwell

Red petals on fire.
Listen to the faint rustle:
hummingbird feeding.

Kelley Piggott

Tadpoles grow four legs
In shallow, murky water,
Die in a snake's mouth.

Susan Lynn

Wandering gypsies
traveling over seas
aircraft carriers

Jennifer Wechsler



*Pencil Drawing by Wendy Wortham
Third Place, Art
Muse Contest*

THE ARTIST'S DAUGHTER

(After A Painting by William Merritt Chase)

Cornelia Barnwell

Your childish face
too narrow to be beautiful.
A pale oval surrounded
by thick brown waves.
Your chin cocked with
the stubbornness of youth.
Innocent lips the color of sin.
Shadowed eyes,
their darkness melting.
A thin white ribbon
teasing your shoulders,
mocking your tiny, solemn self.

ANTINIOUS: A PAINTING

Kelley Piggott

Virgins surround him
with awe and wonder;
fingers touch lightly
the body of an emperor.
A gold medallion braves his chest,
depicts the victory
over the Greeks on the Assisi beach.
He is a hero to the women inside.
Their nudity shows
their trust in him,
their breasts resemble
their faith.

A MOOR SCRAPING CHOCOLATE

Jennifer Wechsler

He grimaces over his left shoulder,
his eyes white pebbles in a bed of coal,
his skin black
as charcoal briquets.

Dutifully, he kneels at his work table
like a sinner at the altar.
His arms like machines
work the rolling pin.

Like the ocean's tide,
he scrapes the rich chocolate
over and over until
the slab transforms,
sweet shavings placed in a bowl.

Beside him lie
mounds of chocolate
like mountains of dough
waiting to be
teased into shreds.

*Honorable Mention, Poetry
Muse Contest*



Photograph by Helen Spruill

SOUTHBOUND

by Courtney O'Kelley

The gas pump clicked and chugged as I filled my dusty car with unleaded gasoline. I thought of my relatives as I watched the numbers on the pump whiz by. They all drove old cars that did not use unleaded gas. Grandma had been driving that old white Ford with the ugly red interior since I could remember. Uncle Don's '64 GMC truck was his best friend; to see one without the other would be almost unsettling. Aunt Essie and my cousins shared an old Buick that took them the few places they ever went. As I paid for my gas, I hoped that none of that had changed. Surely some things would be different. Living in the city I saw changes every day; once I tried to find my favorite hot dog stand, and a hotel had been slapped up in its place in less than a month. Ten years is a long time, but I wanted the farm to be exactly as I had left it. I would find out in a matter of hours. I had left without ever saying good-bye and now I was jittery about returning home.

Every time I stopped for a Coke, or gas, or just to stretch my legs, I noticed people's accents sounding more and more southern. The further south I drove, the more everyone began to sound as if they had known me all my life—the way southerners usually sound. They don't necessarily sound as if they have liked you, but as if they've known you at any rate. New York was the opposite. Maybe that is why I was headed home.

Around 3:30 in the afternoon, I found myself in a situation that would have driven me crazy ten years before. I was driving behind a man on his tractor. I could not pass him because of the oncoming traffic, but I did not care. The way he sat in the seat of the slow-moving tractor, like a patient roosting hen, or the way he occasionally took off his John Deere hat and wiped his sticky forehead with the sleeve of his dirty, cotton shirt reminded me of my Uncle Don. I started to wonder if it might really be him. But I was still a long way from the farm so I knew he could not be Uncle Don.

Finally, he pulled over onto a dirt path and drove through a tobacco field. Suddenly I was not as nervous as I had been. It was almost as if I had confronted Uncle Don and only had the women to deal with. They were more easily persuaded to forgive for some unknown reason. At least, that is how I remembered them. Grandma was stern enough, but I did not think even she could turn away a member of her own family. She had wanted me to stay on the farm, marry a local boy, and raise a lot of kids, but I went against her wishes. I was not looking forward to facing her.

I reclined my seat a bit and turned up the volume on

my tape deck, as my mind wandered back to the night of the big forest fire. It was my eleventh birthday and my uncle and cousins had been asleep for hours. A migrant worker banged on the back door. Grandma had already been wakened by the distant sirens and the faint smell of smoke. She was sitting on the porch swing, staring out at the horizon at an orange glow. "Forst-fire," she said, as I came out onto the porch, rubbing my eyes. She never said a whole lot in one sitting.

My uncle and his sons came out of the house and looked at the faraway blaze in the sky. Uncle Don was a turkey farmer and he was worried that the fire might reach the turkey houses. He got into his truck and my cousins jumped into the back and drove to the fire. Grandma sent me back to bed, but I could not sleep.

After an hour or so, I crept downstairs and went back outside to look for her. I noticed that the orange glow was much brighter. It had even begun to feel warmer. I got on my bike and pedaled to the turkey houses to see if the turkeys were all right. I felt as if my heart was swelling as I came closer to the turkey houses. The sky looked almost completely orange, with black smoke pumping through its veins.

As I approached the first turkey house, I heard the muffled, thunder-sound of wings flapping from the excitement and heat. The turkeys were frightened, which was dangerous in and of itself. "They ain't the williest creatures God ever took a notion to creatin'," Grandma used to say. When turkeys are frightened, they smother each other. They flock into a massive pile and try to hide under one another. The battle to get on the bottom of the pile is a sad, hideous thing to witness. I knew then that my uncle would lose a lot of turkeys and a lot of money.

I started to roll the window-flaps down over the screen windows of the house, thinking that if the turkeys could not see the glow, they might not be as frightened. A voice behind me said, "What's in that head of yours, youngin'? It's right hot in there as 'tis!" It was Grandma. She had been on the far side of the house and the noise from the wing-flapping had kept us from hearing one another. I followed her to the other side of the house where she had dug a shallow ditch and filled it with water from the hose, to keep the fire from reaching the house. "Get you a shovel; you's old enough to hep now."

The traffic was less dense now that I was about fifty miles from home. I wondered who might be the first person I would see. I hoped that it would be Aunt Essie. I had always been her favorite. She had four sons and no daughters, and even though I look just like my mother, who

died when I was a baby, Aunt Essie said that I was a nice reminder. Grandma, on the other hand, could barely look me in the face, because it was too painful for her. I could hear Aunt Essie's voice in my head as I imagined what she might say. "Glenda! I just knew you'd come back. I just knew you would!" Then she would spin me around and shove food down my throat until I was as chubby as the day I left without even saying "Good-bye." In New York, I shortened my name to "Glen," but I was anxious to hear "Glenda" again.

It was getting dark, which meant automatic bedtime at the farm. Maybe no one would be awake when I got there. That way I might be able to sneak in and get in my old bed and postpone the confrontations until dawn, when everyone woke up to start working. I knew I would not sleep either way, so I preferred to wait until morning.

I passed the old lumber mill and began to drive slower. I was nervous again. I noticed the knuckles in my hand were white because I had been clenching the steering wheel too hard. I was having trouble trying to drive and smoke a cigarette at the same time. Ashes kept falling in my lap because I was forgetting to use the ashtray. I saw the sign labeled, "IVANHOE, N.C.—2 miles." I was home. Before going that last quarter-mile, I stopped the car and got out to collect my thoughts. The old, wooden Ivanhoe sign looked like an antique ghost-town relic. The once-white paint had turned the same color as the Spanish moss that hung from the trees behind it. Someone had used the sign for target practice, or maybe a deer hunter with bad aim had hit it by mistake. The paint on the lettering was so faded that unless you knew where you were, you would never know you had passed through Ivanhoe. A bobwhite whistled from a branch overhead, and the crickets got continuously louder. I even thought I heard a distant rattler seducing its prey with that paralyzing sound.

For just an instant, I forgot that I had ever gone away from the place. A wave of familiarity came over me. I got back in my car and drove towards the farmhouse. I was not nervous anymore. When I reached the long, dirt driveway, I turned off my headlights so that they would not shine through any windows, and wound my way through the oaks and pines. As their shadows bent and touched the hood of my car, the trees seemed to be bowing, welcoming me back. I eased the car under the big willow tree in the back yard.

I got out of my Honda, quietly closed the door, and hoped that I would never have to get in the car again. I saw Uncle Don's truck parked by the old water pump. The Buick was underneath the overhang of the barn roof.

I did not see Grandma's Ford. I walked onto the porch and the boards seemed to creak louder than they used to. I saw the light from the hurricane lamp that Grandma always lit at night. Easing the door open, I stepped inside the family room, then looked on the mantle above the cold, black woodstove and saw my picture, still there with the others. It had been taken before I left. My face looked so young. I was nineteen then.

I heard someone coming downstairs in the front of the house. I froze. It was not Uncle Don. The slippers were the sliding kind that women wear. I kept my eyes on the doorway that connected the family room to the kitchen and a fat shadow appeared. "Is someone there?" It was Aunt Essie's voice. I could not think of what to say for a few seconds, but I finally mumbled, "It's me." She turned on the overhead light and looked me square in the face. There was no expression on hers for almost a minute. She did not recognize me. Then, all at once, her eyes moistened. I could not tell if she was glad to see me, or if at any second, she would open the back door and ask me to leave.

She had aged. Her face, which used to be so smooth and tan, looked like a withered potato. Her eyes were still gentle, but they looked wounded somehow. She had always been heavy-set, but now she looked lumpy. Her hair had no sheen; it was a flat, greyish-beige. Her mouth began to tremble and her eyes squinted the way they used to when she was about to smile. She turned abruptly and went upstairs. I waited a moment and made my way up the long staircase. I wondered what I was supposed to do. When I reached the top of the stairs, I saw that the light in my old bedroom had been turned on. I went in and lay on the old, ivory-colored, dotted-Swiss bedspread. I heard Aunt Essie waking up Uncle Don.

I could hear him roll over when she half-whispered, "Donnell? Glenda's home." Then there was silence. Somehow I knew that Grandma was not there. She would have been the first to hear me come in. She could hear a twig snap fifty feet away. So she was dead; I could feel it. I heard Uncle Don say in a low grumble, "You was right, Essie. You said she'd be back."

No one said another word. I stared at the ceiling with my hands behind my head and listened to the outdoor sounds. Another bobwhite breezed by. I heard the moths hitting the window screen because I had not turned off the light. There was a cat fight brewing near the barn, and the crickets were out in full force. Grandma loved those blessed bugs more than music. All of the outdoor sounds grew louder as hot tears slid into my ears, down my arms, and blended into the sweat on my pillow.

*Courtney O'Kelley
First Place, Prose
Muse Contest*



"The Jury" by Katherine Norman

LESLIE'S EYES

Cheryl Emery

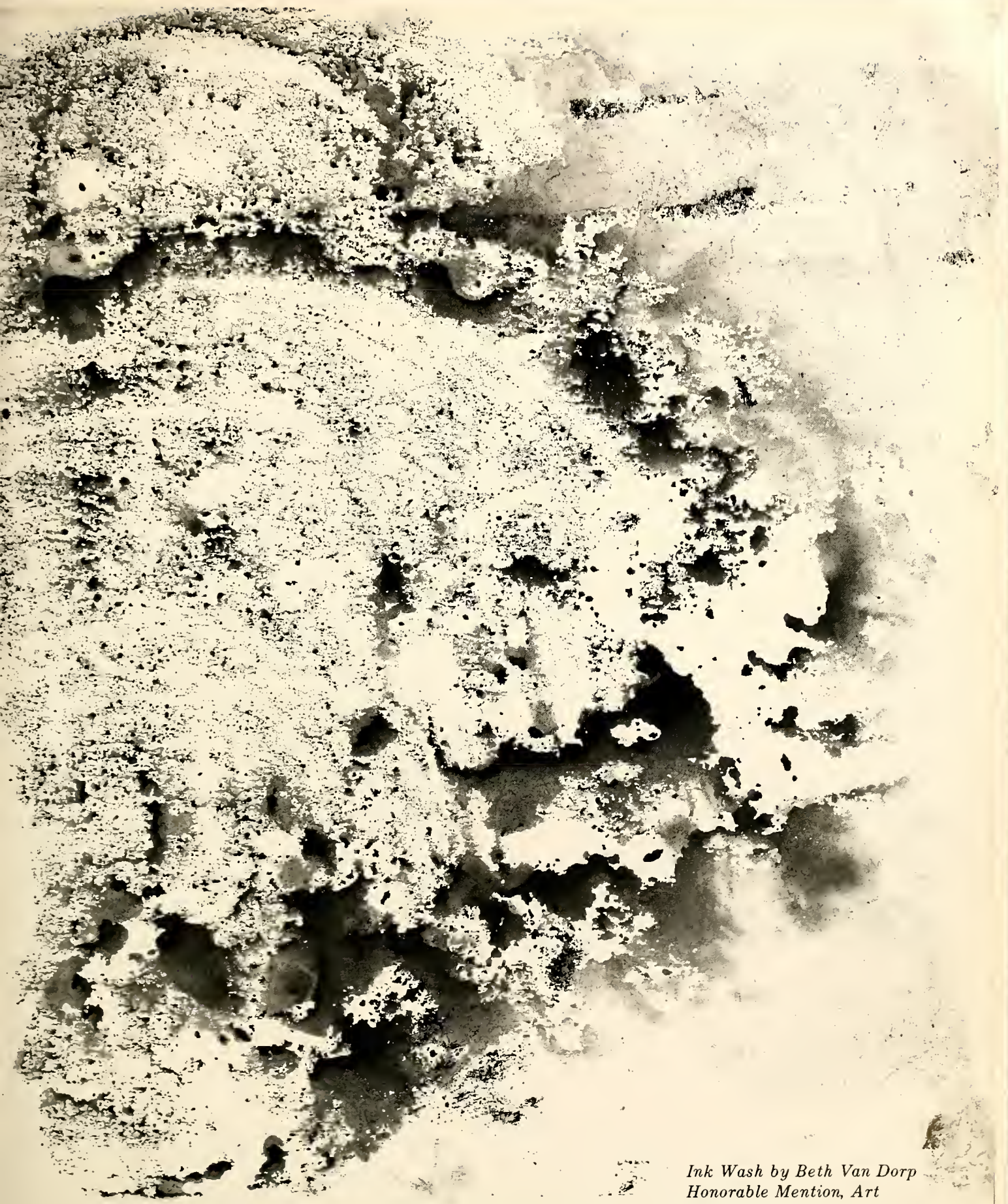
Leslie's eyes
are blurred blue jays
swarming near my open window
on an April morning
her pupil
an onyx ladybug
the chestnut freckles
are her babies
and she shies away with them
from the white light.
Leslie's eyes are periwinkles
that sparkle in the sun
and sway to the journey
of spring breezes.

A CONCH SHELL

Sallie Thorpe

Some see
her shining brilliance
but not many
dare to venture her
depths
where she waits patiently,
surrounded by
mediocrity.
You listen to her
apparent hollowness.
At first she is soft,
but soon she builds momentum
and crashes.
Her efforts to cry out are futile
because only the moon
can see the beauty
that lies inside
and that's when one notices
the spikes of bitterness
that spiral around and around
and the thousands of rigid lines
that harden and choke her.

*Honorable Mention, Poetry
Muse Contest*



*Ink Wash by Beth Van Dorp
Honorable Mention, Art
Muse Contest*

POEM

Sunday Jan McLean

He tried to make me feel naked. . .
vulnerable, in the rising sun—
and I was.
I pulled shades
and hid
behind broken windows.
The sign on my life said:
“Closed Down”
and I knew the red-hot needles—
but no people understood
why I rejoiced in the wild wind—
why I donned my blue raincoat
and soaked in melancholy tides.
He tried to make me feel empty. . .
a dark speck in the dawn light
and I was
and I was content to be
so.

DOG OF REBELLION

by Elise Lillard

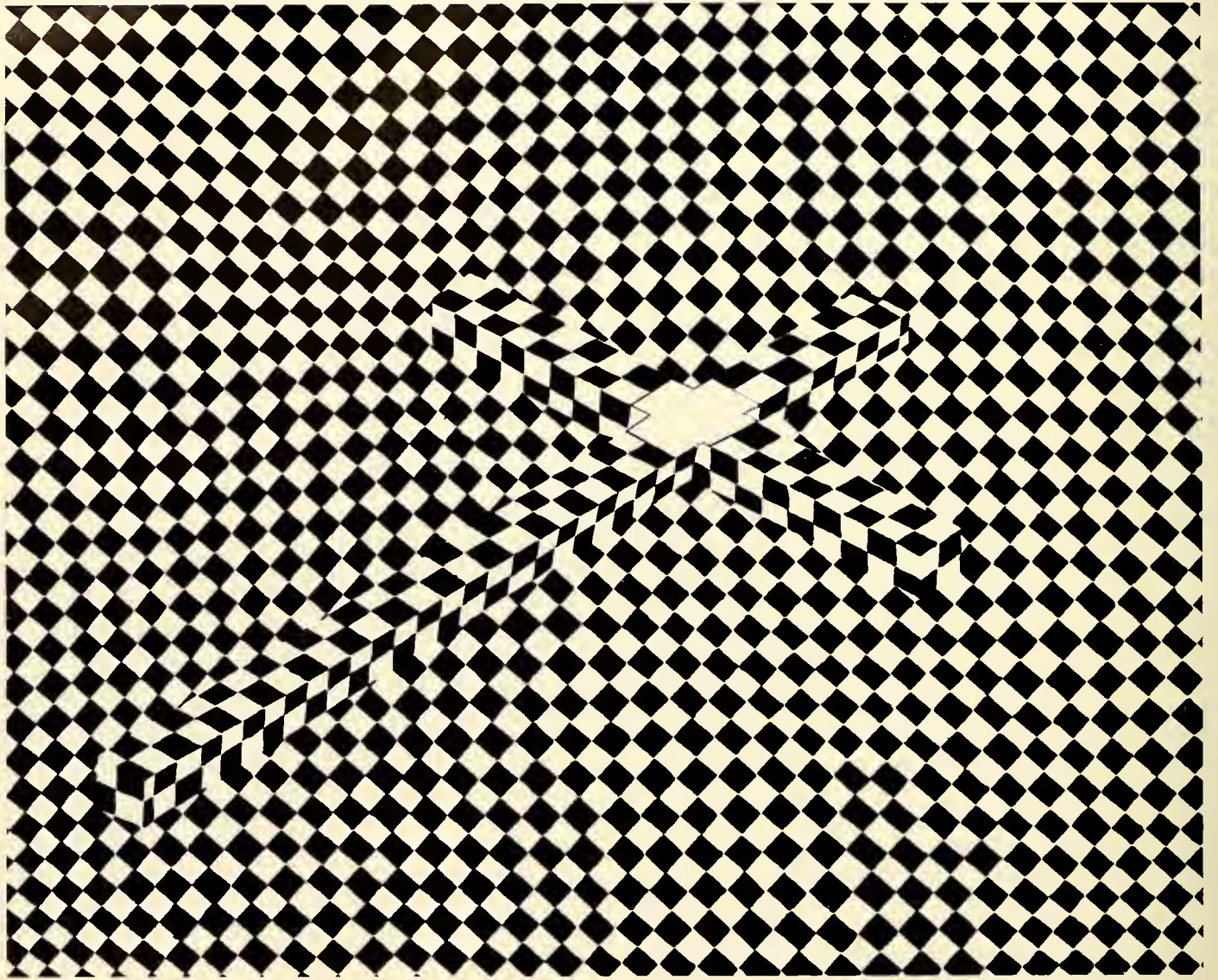
The dog lay on the sidewalk with his tongue rolled out like a fat, three-inch worm. The worm would suddenly disappear into the dog's mouth, flick across his nose, and then slap down on the concrete, enlarging the pool of slobber. The dog's breath was quick and heavy; the thermometer read 95 degrees outside. Milly stared at the dog while he repeated the belabored process with his tongue over and over, amazed that he could manage so much activity. Nothing was moving outside—she slapped her neck—except the mosquitoes. Sweat ran down Milly's whole body and the insects swarmed to the salty smell. Air conditioning, television, and food were just a few yards away, but Milly did not even look back at the house. She could hear the violence and did not want to go near it.

The dog whimpered at Milly, but she ignored it. The thing was a stray, and probably covered with fleas. He was a cute mutt, but the thought of trying to adopt him never entered Milly's head. Once, about a year before, Milly had brought a stray into the house and asked Mama if she could keep it. Mama absolutely screamed. She began swinging her broom, nearly killing both the dog and Milly. As soon as the dog was out of the house, Mama grabbed Milly, shoved her into the tub, and scrubbed her skin raw. Milly had to clean the house top to bottom, with Mama standing over her and screaming about "evil fleas." Mama was still screaming when Daddy got home, and screamed as some people took her away in a white van.

Milly did not see Mama for about a month and life around the house was quiet. Mama came home with a

saggy face and two large bottles of pills. She walked slowly and did not answer questions sometimes, but the house was quiet. Then Mama stopped taking her pills. Milly and Daddy had not been watching for the signs; they had confidence in the pills. This morning they had found out with a bang that their trust had been betrayed. Daddy had said the eggs were a bit runny. Luckily, the plate missed his head; the eggs did not, and Daddy suddenly felt tiny yellow rivulets dropping from his hair. Milly giggled, then ducked as a glass flew over her head. She was out the door before Mama's glass hit the wall. She raced to the front of the house and was prepared to keep running if Mama appeared, but the crazed voice stayed inside the house. Although Milly could not hear Daddy talking over Mama's screams, she knew he was trying to persuade Mama to take her pills. She listened to Mama ruin another set of dishes by playing dodge-plate with Daddy.

The dog wagged its tail and his eyes begged Milly for a tummy rub. Her hand stretched out and hovered above the dog. It floated closer . . . closer. I do love Mama, thought Milly, but . . . no, I have to love her! She squeezed her eyes shut and started to cry as her fingers lightly brushed the dog's fur. Suddenly, as if awakening from a nightmare, Milly's eyes flew open. The screaming had stopped and the only sound from the house was Mama groaning for Milly. Milly's hand quickly retreated behind her back. Her leg placed a sharp kick in the dog's side, which sent him off and howling. Milly hurried back to the house, sweat mixing with her tears.



Pen and Ink by Karen Worthington

PROUD AND PIOUS

Courtney O'Kelley

Grandma had a Bible in each room,
a Bible in her Chevy (just in case),
and a bookcase of Bibles by her bed.
She counted them, proud and pious.

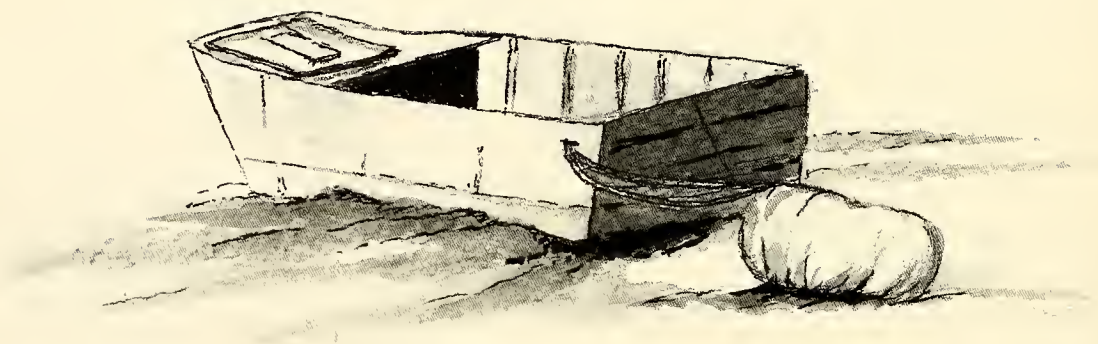
It wasn't Grandma
but Luke, John,
or Proverbs (her favorite)
who answered each remark,
an automatic response.

And she looked like a Bible:
leathery skin, martyr's eyes,
her spine stiff
as the King James version.

Only senility made her smile.
She couldn't remember her
verses verbatim—
except for one:

"If there be any virtue,
If there be any praise,
Think on these things."

*First Place, Poetry
Muse Contest*



EAY
80

Mixed Media by E. Ann Yancy

SEA

Elizabeth Leach

Provoked by drops of wonder
that fill my brain,
i can hear the rain.

Watched by flooded windows
that blink for fun,
i can touch the sun.

BRIGHTON IN A SUITCASE

by Mary Beth Mann

Anna squinted down at the Brit-Rail map, her free hand feeling her pockets for her glasses. She had escaped and the day was hers.

It was not quite nine-thirty in the morning and the day had been in danger of being ruined until Anna did what she did. The day had begun with a not-unexpected carry-over of the fight from the night before.

"I am going down to breakfast, and once I am finished I am going out, and I am not waiting on any of you," Anna's father had boomed, alerting their wing of the hotel to the fight.

"I don't eat breakfast, so by the time you finish eating I'll be dressed," Anna answered him evenly. She knew her mother and her sister Sarah would take forever and cause her father to rage even louder.

Predictably, her mother and Sarah were late, her father ranted, and Anna waited downstairs for the surly group.

"My family just doesn't travel very well together," Anna thought miserably as they walked to the subway station.

As if to answer her thought, Sarah whined, "Where do we have to go today?" as they boarded the train, "I'm tired of walking around this stupid city."

Anna's father had begun his pat story of how he had wanted to bring his family to England and have a good time, when something in Anna snapped. From her position at the door she asked her father, just as the doors opened, "Is this the way it's going to be all day?" Her father took a deep breath and suddenly Anna knew just what she had to do. She darted off the train, yelling over her shoulder, "I've got to go. I'll see you tonight. Don't worry!" The doors to the train had closed and the train had pulled away. Anna's feet had danced up the escalator as the weight lifted.

Finding her glasses in the deep breast pocket of her coat, Anna studied the map, trying to find the best route to her destination—Brighton. Finally she figured it out, reboarded the subway, got off at Charing Cross, and just made the 10:05 East Croydon train headed towards Brighton.

As the train started to pull out of the station, Anna sat back and thought, "Damn, I've really done it. I've left them and they can't ruin my day any more. Maybe I'll never go back." The country was rushing by and she was tempted to pull out her Walkman and set the beautiful vista to music. She decided against it, preferring instead to listen to the British lilt of the other voices in the car. She fished into her backpack and pulled out a half-eaten Cadbury bar and a black elastic hair band. She pinned her long, curly brown hair into a granny knot and bit into the bar of chocolate. Cadbury chocolate in the United States did not seem to taste half as good.

After about an hour, the train stopped and everyone aboard got off. "Well," Anna thought, "here is another problem for the new me to solve." Anna strapped her leather knapsack on her back like a Superman cape and walked up to the first man in uniform she could find.

"Pardon me, sir. Which train do I take to get to Brighton?"

"Well, love, you take the second train that comes in about twenty minutes. It might be a little late, though. In Thatcher's England we're all a little slow," the conductor replied. "You're American, aren't you?"

A little "no" was all Anna could manage before he started again.

"I went to America once, me and the wife, went to Miami Beach, we did. All the girls there wore little bikinis. Do you wear bikinis?"

Anna took a look at his face and silently proclaimed him guilty of awful things. Then she thanked him sweetly and quickly walked to the coffee shop. It was toasty in there, smelling of tea and coffee and pastries. She ordered a cup of tea and smoked a cigarette in silent contemplation. On her right were a man and his young daughter, the latter talking excitedly about going to London to see her mother. Anna made up a poor, sad scenario in her head and turned slightly to the left. What she saw there interested her to no end.

The young man on the stool next to her was big and blond. He looked like the lead character in a movie she had just seen. On the floor next to him sat a huge pack that must have held all of his worldly goods. Anna sneaked peeks at him while she finished her tea and cigarette. She thought of things she could say to him, ways to approach him, but everything she thought of sounded silly, so she gave up. She ordered a cup of tea to go and went out to the platform to wait on her train. She was freezing. She kept thinking about the long underwear in her backpack and how good it would feel. She noticed the time; she had a good five minutes to find a place to change. She walked into an empty room with a stove at one end and decided that it would do. She got the legs of the underwear over her boots; then standing, she hiked her skirt up so that she could tuck her shirt into the underwear. Then he walked in. The blond with the pack stared at her in her long underwear. Anna was appalled, but pulled her skirt down, gathered her things, and walked outside.

Her train pulled in and she climbed into the first open compartment and laughed hysterically into her coat sleeve. The door to Anna's compartment opened and to Anna's surprise, the blond bear got in, tugging his pack behind him. Before Anna could say anything, he put up a hand and said in a fine Irish drawl, "You've the best pair of legs I've ever seen, but next time I'll ask for the favor."

Anna laughed again and held out her hand, "Anna Harvey is my name. Who are you?"

"Sean Tracey's the name," the Irish giant said. "What's a nice American girl like you doing on a train alone to Brighton?"

"Oh, I'm going to meet some friends, some friends that I am travelling with," Anna lied. She didn't know why she had done it, but it seemed like the right thing to do. "I came into some money, so I'm travelling all over the world."

"So, Anna Harvey, what have you seen so far?"

Anna thought carefully, weighing her lies. "Well, um, I just started. I'm on the first leg of my tour. I had to see some people in London and my friends went ahead so I'm meeting them in Brighton today."

"Ah, this is also my first time to Brighton. I'm visiting some relatives before I go to France."

Anna got the details pretty fast. He was twenty-three, had just finished at the University (she didn't recognize the name), and was travelling before he started work as a banker. She didn't believe him, thinking that he was probably an IRA terrorist. She let him ramble on, though, adding her own lies from time to time. Then the train pulled into Brighton. Anna knew she must get rid of the terrorist, so she concocted some errands to run before meeting her friends.

"Thank you so much for the company. It really has been nice talking to you. I've got some things to do now," she rambled. "I need to buy a suitcase. Good luck in your travels!"

With that, Anna jumped from the train and waggled her fingers in farewell. She crossed her eyes and made a face, just as she always did after extracting herself from a situation she had created. "You really can't judge a book by its cover," Anna thought. The old saying made her smile as she ran from the train and down the steps to the cobblestoned streets.

After walking a few blocks with only high walls on either side of the street, Anna was glad to see the row of shops begin. The first shop on the left was "Tilly's, The Best Junk In Town." Anna shaded her eyes and peered into the window. Beautiful antiques beckoned her inside. Anna gave in and entered the shop. She felt for her money pocket and counted the money she had left. She had just a little over five pounds. She certainly couldn't go far on that. She was turning to go when she spied some suitcases by the door. She examined each of them and when she came to the last case, she knew that one belonged to her. The case itself was nothing to look at—the tags were what had caught her attention. It seemed as though all of the airports of the world were represented. The little case had been checked through Paris, London, New York, Hong Kong, Bangkok, and even Gibraltar.

Anna took the case over to the clerk to ask the price. "How much for this one?"

"I'll let that one go for two pounds," the old man

replied, motioning her closer. "That case has been with me a long time."

Anna was shocked that the man would sell a piece of his history for so little, but she knew a bargain when she saw one. "I'll take it, please."

The stooped gnome took her note and gave her change. He bowed and thanked her. The shop door banged behind her as she resumed her travels.

Anna could see seagulls over the town, so she followed them to the shore. She skipped through town pretending she was in "Quadrophenia" and had to get to the beach tonight. Too bad she didn't have a motor-scooter.

Suddenly she was there. It was so much more than she had imagined it could possibly be. It was the perfect beach. Anna stood at the railing that looked over the rocky beach and let down her hair. The cold wind took her breath away. Turning her back to the beach, she inspected the buildings that lined the beach. Each of them was white, the way buildings at the beach should be. She pulled her camera from her bag and loaded a roll of black and white film. This was the way she wanted to remember her day.

Anna walked down the boardwalk—taking pictures all the way—until she came to the famous Brighton Pier. She walked past cafes, tourist photo shops, and amusement booths until she reached the very end of the pier. She looked out to sea and drank it all in with her eyes. Any other person would have looked out and seen nothing. Anna looked out and saw all of her plans and dreams stretched out before her. She took one last photo, the last on the roll, and turned away from the sea, back to her life.

As she passed the last cafe on the pier, she caught a glimpse of a familiar backpack. Then she saw her IRA terrorist from the train seated at a table full of young people. She smiled and waved through the glass, forgiving herself for her lies.

Anna glanced at her watch and was shocked at how late it was. She hadn't done half the things she had planned to, but somehow she felt satisfied. She stopped in a shop to ask directions to the train station and bought a candy bar.

She reached the station only minutes before the train to London left. This time she was alone in the car as the train pulled out of Brighton. Anna sat back, propped up her feet, and reflected.

This day away from her family had been the best day of her life. Nothing could take this feeling away—it would sustain her through the rest of the time in England and for the rest of her life. She was sure of it.

Anna's head dropped to one side and she slept until the train stopped with a jolt. For a dizzy minute, Anna thought the entire trip had been a dream. Soon reality returned and she left the train for the subway, left the Central Line at the Queensway station and marched determinedly back to the hotel, carrying her Brighton suitcase.

*Mary Beth Mann
Second Place, Prose
Muse Contest*

GREENNESS

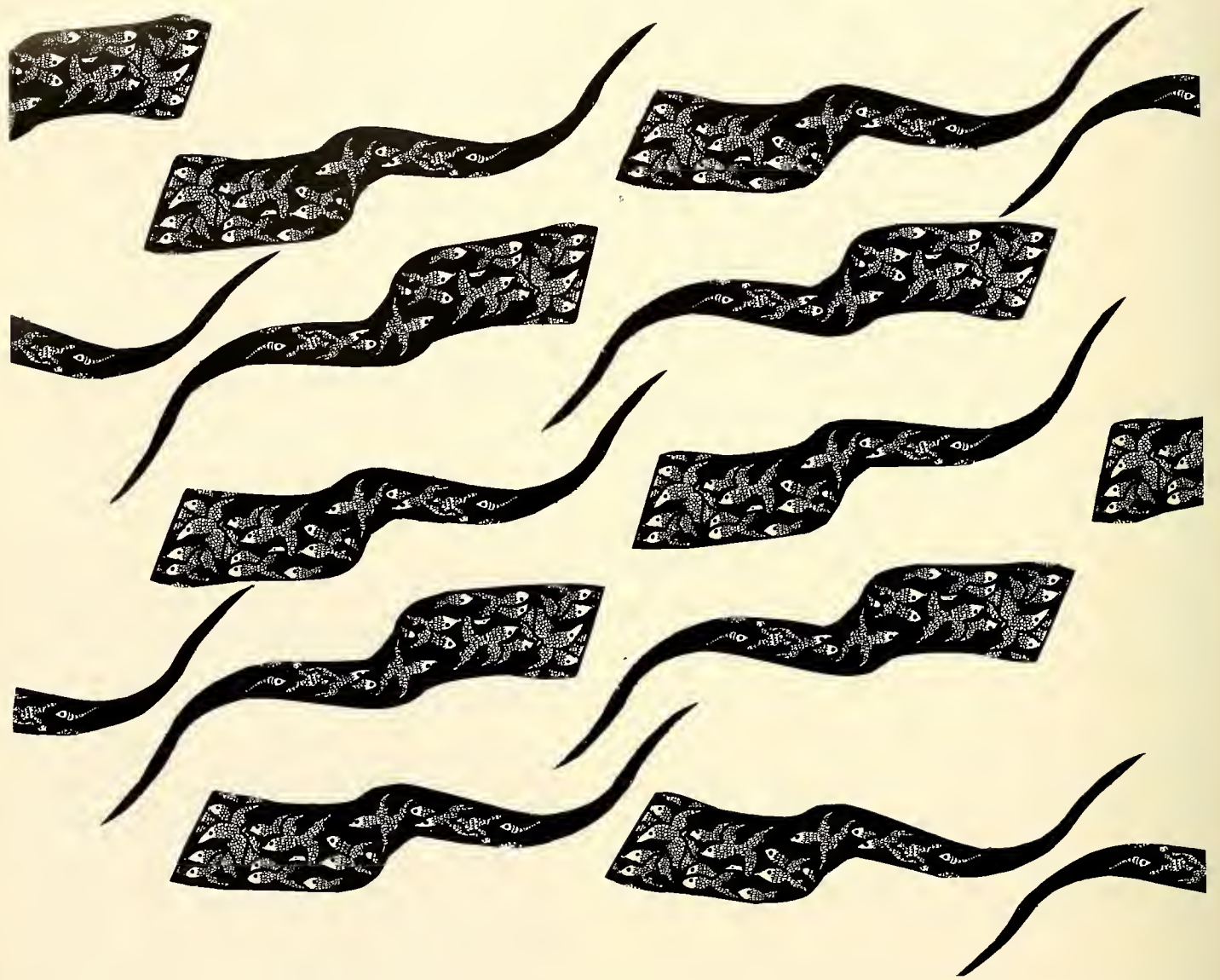
Elizabeth Leach

greenness, grassless
purple blades tickle my toes.
orangeness, appleless
lightning bug glows.
blueness, glueless
ocean water flows.
tickness, tockless
no one really knows.

THE INDOOR ZOO

Vivian Norwood

I have kittens in my kitchen
and the deer are down the hall
the monkey's on the hanging lamp
the seals are playing ball
the fish are in the bathtub
and the attic's full of bats
there's a cardgame in the cupboard
with a fox and several rats
the otter's playing "genie"
and the turtle's made a wish
the blue jay feeds the elephant
some peanuts on a dish
there's a party in the pantry
and the rabbit's pouring tea. . .
now why did all these animals
decide to visit me?

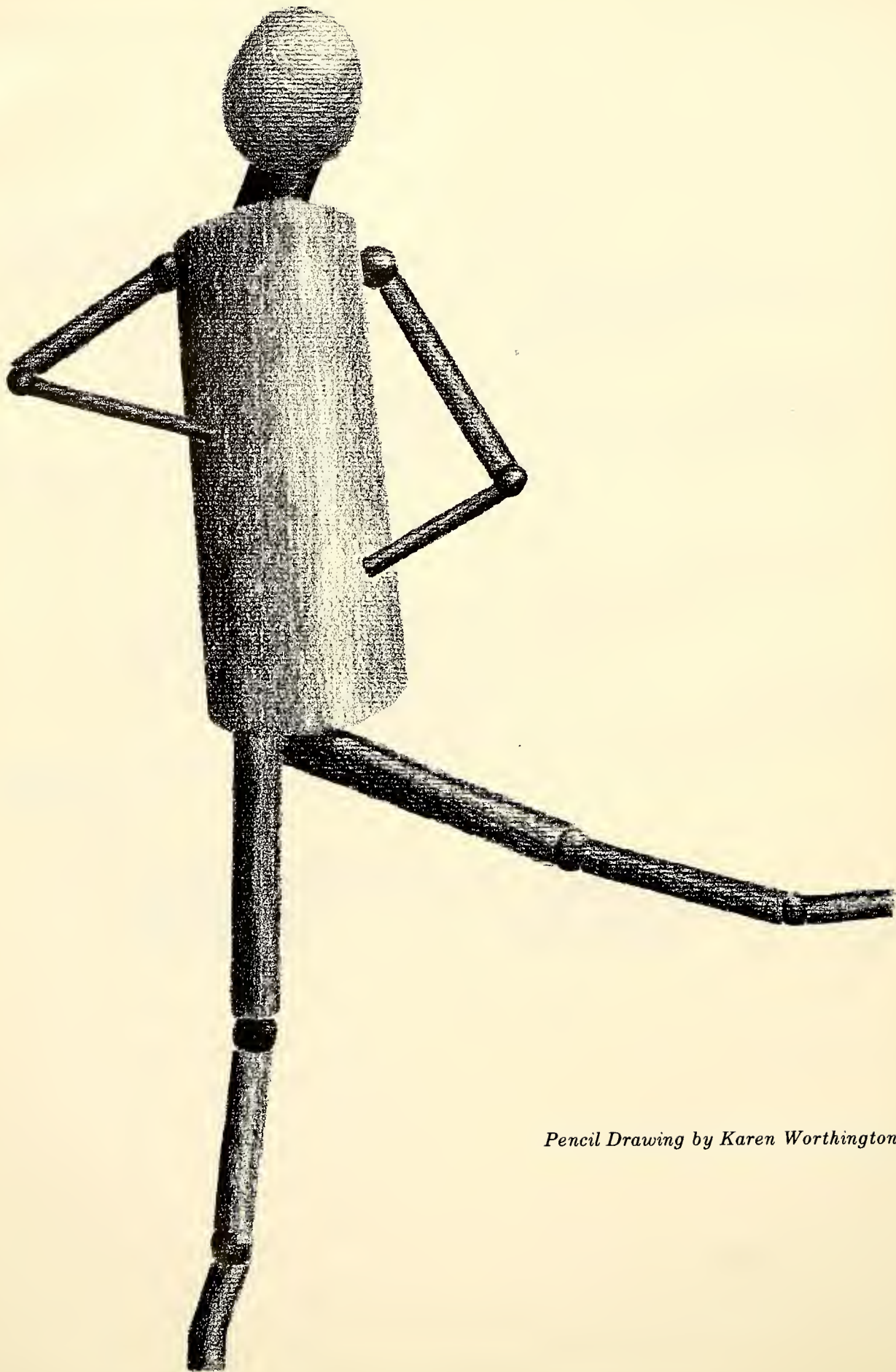


Pen and Ink by Lisey Wilson

POEM

Cheryl Emery

slick
moist
silver serpents
guard her body
an Amazon
they coil
tightly about her breasts
she is taut
a vamp
pearl teeth clenched
between
plump onyx lips
eyes of sapphire
glazed with evil
beads of condensation
glide down her scaled skin
she does not shed
but penetrates
all
drops swirling in s
 p
 i
 r
 a
 l
 s
down her jet locks
scents
of the opium flower
she
awaits the victim
to swallow him
whole



Pencil Drawing by Karen Worthington

LUNCH BOX

by *Cornelia Barnwell*

This cold winter morning I immediately waken when I hear her muffled footsteps on the thick carpet of the stairs. My pulse quickens as they reach my door, and I frantically pull my pink coverlet from its ignored heap at the foot of my bed and cover myself with it, tucking all the edges under my still sleep-warm body to form a giant Bazooka bubble that not even my mother can penetrate. The doorknob squeaks and through the gauzy material I can sense the lights being turned on. I lie perfectly still, chewing on the end of my wheat-colored braid and wondering if she can hear my heart banging against my ribcage. With one smooth jerk, she manages to grasp the least secure corner of my bedspread and sweep the entire thing from underneath me, my struggling only proving to her that I am, as usual, wide awake. She smiles as she pulls my feet around to touch the cold, hard wood of the floor. "Don't you know, Reesie, that that old trick is never going to work?"

She weaves her way through the abandoned lumps of clothes in my room to my window where she pulls open the curtains, and gazes out onto the grey, frozen stillness of our neighborhood slowly waking. I crack my eyes open to see her standing by the window, rubbing her five-month swollen belly under her thick red housecoat. "Cruel, cruel February," she mutters, her eyes stuck on the ice covering the trees. She yawns, and then turns to my dresser; she tosses a pair of rust-colored corduroys and a navy blue turtleneck onto the bed and reminds me that I will have to hurry if I want breakfast. Then she walks down the hall to Frank's room, her blue bedroom shoes popping as she walks, as if they were held on her feet with rubber bands.

I stretch my lazy self out to full length and then hop up and stand in the middle of the bed. Another night, and I still don't look any older; in fact, I don't think I have changed a bit since I turned nine last month. Same old straw-haired scrawny eight-year-old. I bend my knees and jump, landing on the edge of the bed and bouncing my clothes off onto the floor. I dress quickly and race to the bathroom to brush my teeth. I always use lots of toothpaste that foams out onto my cheeks as I ruthlessly scrub back and forth with my yellow toothbrush; then I work on my ugliest face that Frank calls "pig man." This is a new one that I have been working on and I do it by crushing my nose with my middle finger while pulling the skin down under my eyes with my other two fingers. Satisfied, I rinse my face and stomp down the hall past grandmother's room. From behind the door, I can hear my grandmother practicing her morning ritual; she clears her throat with an awful growl that I have tried unsuccessfully to imitate, and then she goes to the bathroom to gargle her Lavoris. Her door opens just as I hop onto the stairway banister and slide down. That always seems to get a terrific rise out of her in the morning. I can hear her hollering to me from the top of the stairs: "Theresa!" She

is the only one who calls me by my given name, which I consider to be far too "girlish," but even she saves it for when she is good and mad.

As I enter the kitchen, Mom is already hurrying to be sure that we are fed and at school on time. Dad's coffee cup and newspaper are still at the head of the breakfast table from when he left for work an hour ago. Frank is seated in his chair, with hair perfectly brushed, and halfway through his oatmeal. I show him my "pig-man" face and he squeals his approval. Mom places a pulpy glass of orange juice at my place at the table where my oatmeal is growing colder, impatiently waiting for me. Then she walks over to the hall closet to find my coat and Frank's coat for our walk to school. It sure is nice that Mom does not have to work like everybody else's Mom, especially now that the new baby is coming. I often hear her telling Daddy that she could take an easy job, like at the library, to get her out of the house; but he won't hear of it. He has even mentioned something lately about buying a second car for her.

Daddy has a boring kind of job. I sometimes wish that he worked as the janitor at school like Dan Poplin's dad does; he always tells us about how he can go over there with his dad at night and run all around the school with nobody there. That has got to be more fun than sitting behind my Dad's boring old desk all day at the law office in town.

Frank finishes his oatmeal and Mom starts to dress him in his coat and those horrible galoshes. She used to let us walk without them until I took Frank on my short-cut to school through the creek in our neighbor's yard. I always hide mine in a tree before we get to school, along with Daddy's thick wool socks that we wear on our hands since Mom got tired of us always losing our mittens. I finish my breakfast and dress myself. Mom hands us both our lunch boxes and then hurries us out the door, kissing both cheeks of both children before we leave, and then watching us until we are around the corner.

The walk to school is not a bad one; we live very close to it and Grandmother insists that Daddy walked to school every day of his life, and it never hurt him any. Grandmother always says that Frank is a lot like my Dad when he was young; Frank is a good enough kid, I suppose, but he will never have the sports ability that I do. Everybody calls me a "tom-boy" and I know that Frank is the last boy in his class to get chosen for any team. I look at him now as he laughs at the smoke of his frozen breath and cannot help but smile at him. He may not be the fastest or the strongest boy in his class, but nobody can play the piano like Frank can.

Grandmother has given him every piano lesson he has had, and even though he is only six, I think he is better now than she was ever. He even played at our school's Christmas program last year; old Mrs. Gunther used to play for them, but she wheezed and coughed so much

while she played that she sounded more like an old pipe organ than a piano. I can remember watching him from the back row of my third grade class as we sang "Silent Night." He looked just like an angel in his white shirt and blue velvet trousers with his blond curls shining in the candlelight. All the parents called him a prodigy, and even my old grandmother was smiling with her eyes shut, rocking to the sound of the beautiful music he played.

We walk silently for a while, the stiff grass crunching under the weight of our fat rubber galoshes. He looks up at me and notices me staring at him as we walk along; he does a weak imitation of "pig-man" that makes him look even sweeter and we both laugh as we approach another group of kids.

Suddenly, Frank is pushed hard; he falls over in the ditch by the road and lands at the base of an old dead tree. Then I hear the most horrible laugh in the world; I lift my eyes from Frank's tear-tracked face to find myself looking straight at my worst enemy—Teddy Alleman. He is the fattest boy in the whole world; the buttons of his old plaid shirt strain over the bloated roundness of his belly; he wears no coat, only a red scarf tied around the blubbery folds of his huge neck. "Shit nigger hell" he drawls, proud of the few curse words he knows. "Well, if it ain't the snotty-nosed Crumpton brats." His friends snicker behind him, encouraging him more. He turns to Frank who is still sitting by the tree, sniffing and rubbing his red nose on his sleeve. "What's wrong, sissy? Can't those hands fight as well as they can play that piano?" At this point, he has really gone too far; fighting back tears that I would never show, I spring towards him with my fingers curved like the claws of a cat. He steps aside to dodge me and I land in the ditch not far from Frank. This brings a roar of laughter from him and his friends and as they turn away I hear Tommy saying: "Shit nigger hell, two sissies, now go cry home to your stuck-up Momma."

Frank has stopped crying but his lower lip is still quivering as if it is made of Jello. I brush the mud off the back of his jacket, and smooth his hair with my fingers: "Don't cry, Frankie. We'll fix that show-off pig." Frank tries to smile as I take his hand and lead him down the road to school. Teddy is right; Frank couldn't fight a cold, but making Frank look so foolish is no way to prove it. He has hurt my sweet gentle brother, and I am not about to let him get away with it. I feel my insides turning black as a stormy sky; I hate Teddy Alleman and I am going to hurt him real bad.

We arrive at school just as the bell is ringing so the halls are packed with kids in fat winter coats, rushing to get to class on time. I tell Frank to meet me at recess by the dumpster in the playground and we will get even. The horrible expression on my face seems to scare Frank more than those awful boys hounding him did. He manages a weak smile, and then turns to follow his classmates down the hall. I watch him as he walks away. All the noise in the hall stops as I stand there staring at the back of his

mud-stained jacket with his blond curls dancing as he hurries along out of sight. The late bell shakes me from my daze; I run for my classroom, knowing that Mrs. Barnes will be standing in the door tapping her ruler in the palm of her hand with a face as stern as the Presbyterian Church.

The time seems to drag until recess. Mrs. Barnes' voice drones in the back of my mind as I think about this morning's incident over and over again. I lay my head on my desk just as the recess bell rings. Then I reach under my desk and grasp the handle of my tin lunch box, and slowly head for the playground. Mrs. Barnes stops me. "Why Reesie, you look positively green! Maybe you should see the nurse and not go outside today." I tell her that my mother has made poached eggs for breakfast so I am really hungry, and that I will probably be much better after lunch. As usual, Mrs. Barnes believes me.

The swings on the playground are alive with children; I dodge my way through a tag game, and walk down to the dumpster to meet Frank. He is already there, seated on the ground, quickly eating his peanut butter and jelly. "I've got to hurry, Reesie. We're going to race the girls after lunch." He looks perfectly happy sitting there with his sandwich with the crusts neatly trimmed off; I wonder if this morning's encounter has bothered him at all.

I drop to my knees beside him and dump the contents of my lunch box onto the ground. His eyes widen as I fill it with several rocks and latch the lid again. Then I stand up and instruct him to follow me, lugging my leaden lunch box with both hands. Teddy and his gang are sitting on an old log in the other corner of the playground. He is once again making a pest of himself by spitting orange drink at the girls passing by. I head towards his group with the intensity of a madman, never taking my eyes off the fat shape of Teddy, who is laughing at the disturbance he is creating. Just then Frank grabs my pants leg. "Stop Reesie! Don't do this!" I turn around and holler, "Cut it out Frank—he hurt you and I am going to fix him good!" He grabs the heavy lunch box with both hands and says, "Reesie, they don't bother me; I was only crying because I thought I had embarrassed you." I stop pulling on the box and stare at him; he looks like some strange kind of platypus with those ridiculous socks on his hands and purple jelly smeared on his flushed cheeks. He really does not care what those boys think about him. In fact, he is right; I care a whole lot more about what they have said than he does. It suddenly feels as if he is the older of the two of us, looking out for me rather than the other way around.

I let go of the handle of my lunch box; it falls to the ground and breaks open, spilling its rocks back onto the ground. Then I take Frank by the hand and lead him back towards a group of kids from his class. "What are we standing around for, Frankie? You've got a race to win."

*Cornelia Barnwell
Third Place, Prose
Muse Contest*



Linoleum Print by Marcia Mooring

WHAT I SAW

Susan Lynn

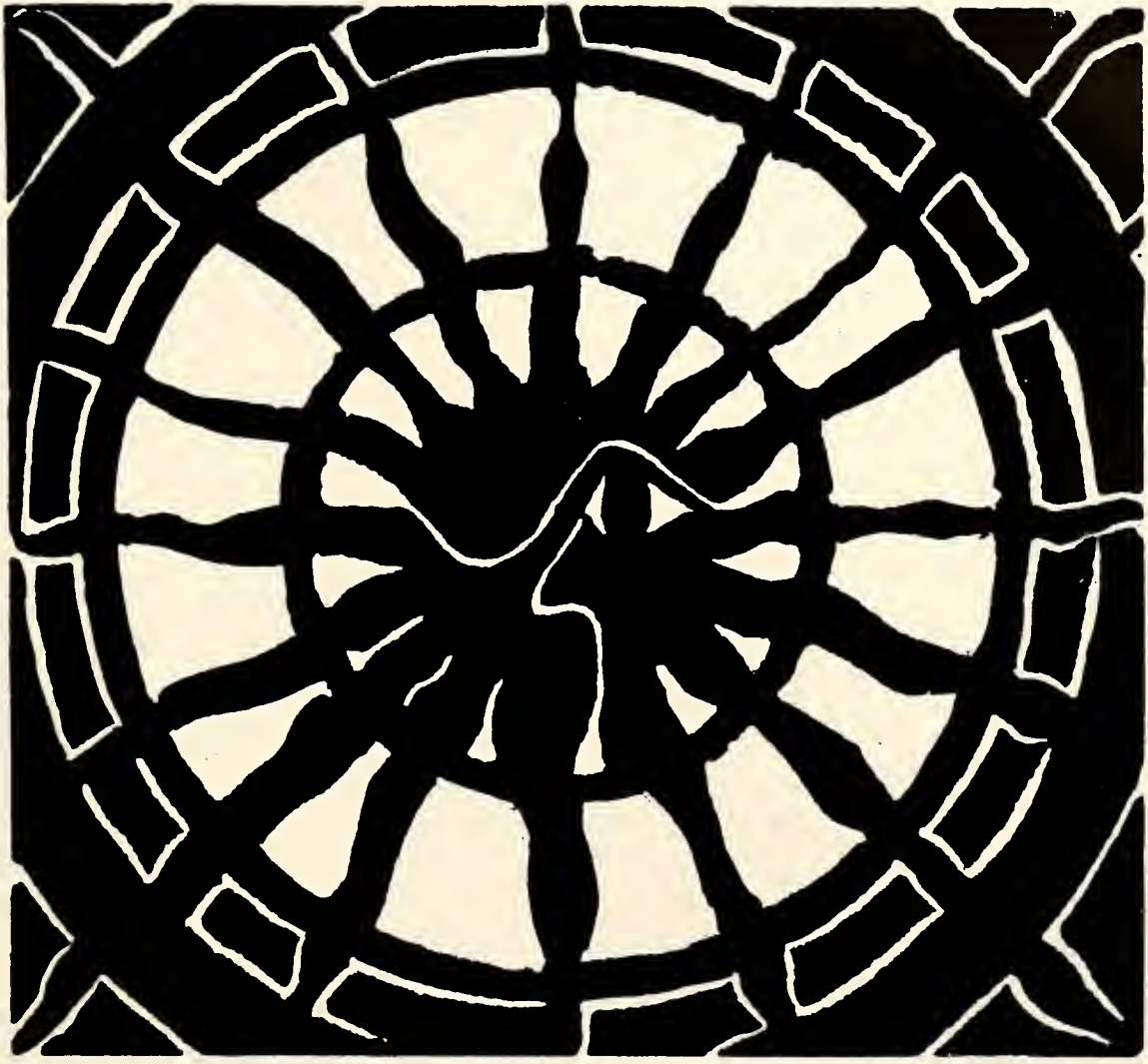
Aqua waves lap the sandy beach,
Foam at the break,
Tumble and toss seashells about.
Out jumps a school of bullets
Splashing back to their salty home,
Intermittent fins playing on the horizon,
Brown pelicans beating their way in a V
Above the tubing waves,
Loud gulls squawk for a meal
As they scurry from the coming foam,
Leaving three-toed prints in the sand.
Fiddling up from the damp below,
A crab sees day
And darts off.
An immortal candle in immaculate blue
Bronzes the sleepers as they snooze.
Down the shore surfboards grow
Like limbless, lifeless trees.

MAGIC MAN

Celia Dunn

I am the magic man
sprinkling my peter pan dust
pulling you from a top hat and cutting you in half
I am the magic man
rescuing you from drowning river
curing you of your sickness
erasing your bodyache
controlling the length of holiday
I am the magic man
in and out swirling and furling of your wishful dreams
I am that lasting lure of space
I am the magic man
fluttering your flickering light bulbs
snapping your snap beans
causing the icy chill that permeates your toilet seat
I am the sweet sensation in your chocolate mousse
I am the bubble sparkle in your champagne
I am not the gnawing, wished-you'd-never-drunk-the-champagne
hangover later—
I am the magic man
I am the can in I think I can
I am the magic man
easing you into the drug of life
never stress for I am your magic man

*Second Place, Poetry
Muse Contest*



Linoleum Print by Elizabeth Leach

LIZARD

Courtney O'Kelley

Your head constantly cocked to one side,
you lick your leathery lips,
lash your liquid tongue.
You seem stuck in place.
Then you move.

Your sets of legs
seem out of sync.
You push, push off
with your back set,
which I can bear.

Your middle meanders,
as if each step
cancels your course.
I can stand your meandering.

But those front feet,
that obese walk,
that clogged mechanical grope—
that, I cannot bear.

As if climbing a telephone pole,
you reach/push, reach/push.
You sicken my soul.
I observe your routine cautiously
as if I am the one in danger.

I stomp my foot.
Suddenly your legs unclog.
You flash away,
escape, only to return when you please—

Brown as bark,
Shifty-eyed.

*Third Place, Poetry
Muse Contest*



Woodcut by Katherine Norman

BRIAR ROSE

Laura Wyrick

One needle that could only paralyze.
These eyes are shut to dream but never wake,
Sleep always in this silent compromise.

Sorcery bargains sleep against demise
As snow likewise can numb despair's heartache.
One needle that could only paralyze.

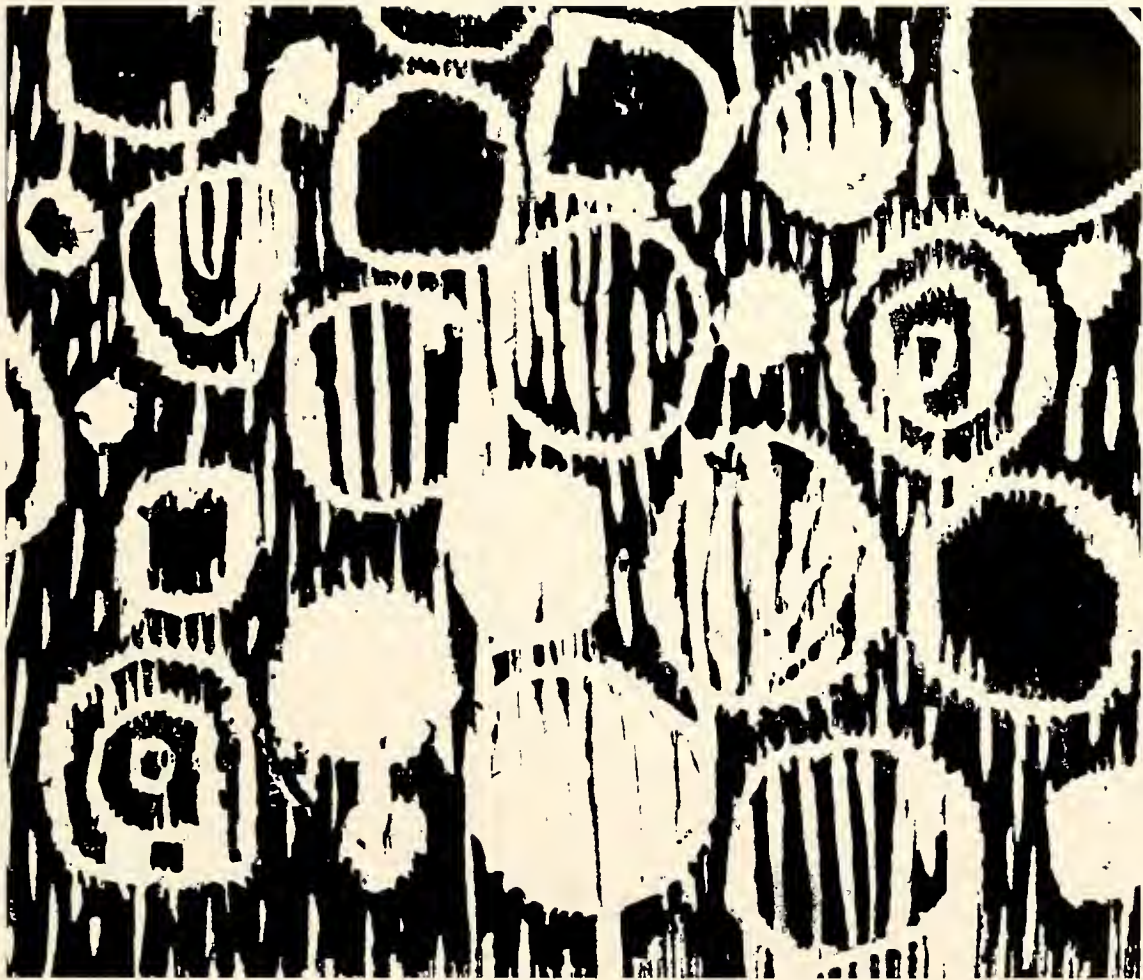
Their princes quickly learn how to despise.
Abandonment, in truth, was no mistake,
Sleep always in this silent compromise.

When love in life exists for sacrifice,
Reality is simple to forsake.
One needle that could only paralyze.

No heart is left awake to agonize,
Whose soul's facade is placed, disguise opaque.
Sleep always in this silent compromise.

Briars rose and wove, but not to ostracize,
Protected from dissolving by daybreak.
One needle that could only paralyze,
Sleep always in this silent compromise.

*Honorable Mention, Poetry
Muse Contest*



Woodcut by Lisey Wilson

RESURGERE

Laura Wyrick

Cold ground enfolds me like a static sea
Which never tosses. Gently may I rest
And rot. I lie in sleep's facsimile.
When Orcus came for me, I went unblest.
I think I could, though I have never tried,
Arise from death to tread the earth once more.
In horror, spring would see me grey, pale-eyed,
Whose shrinking lenses only could abhor
All sight of life through eyes coined in demise.
Would I, the child, be torn from Mother Earth
To scream in vain at living? Realize
That all men hope to buy their own rebirth.
Christ woke dead Lazarus for mortal men.
I've paid my flesh; I too may rise again.







MUSE 1989





*"Images" by Jennifer Walker
Second Place, Art
Muse Contest*

"I can't change the world, but
I can change the world in me."

U2 from October

MUSE 1989
Saint Mary's College



by Beth Stewart

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*Cover Art by Sarah Stevens, First Place Art, Muse Contest

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Women in Profile
by Cackie Loughlin

SAILBOAT SLEEP

Laura Wyrick

The waves and hollow sound of rope on pole,
A beat which follows us to hazy sleep
with silence as an accent to the whole.
White canvas creeps while water whispers deep
Below. The sky above contained and shown
By just one square of night. A space of time
In which to live and be. The sail has flown,
A great, pale wing, its flight but pantomime.
Black fish leap, witness to a dying night.
Rejuvenation waits for more than day
To pass. We make the darkness real, for sight,
And truth cannot exist too far away.
We sail in stationary minds so close,
My thoughts grow soft, and dawning daylight slows.

First Place, Poetry
Muse Contest

**MORNING: After Francois Desportes' Painting,
"Urn of Flowers With a Dead Rabbit"**

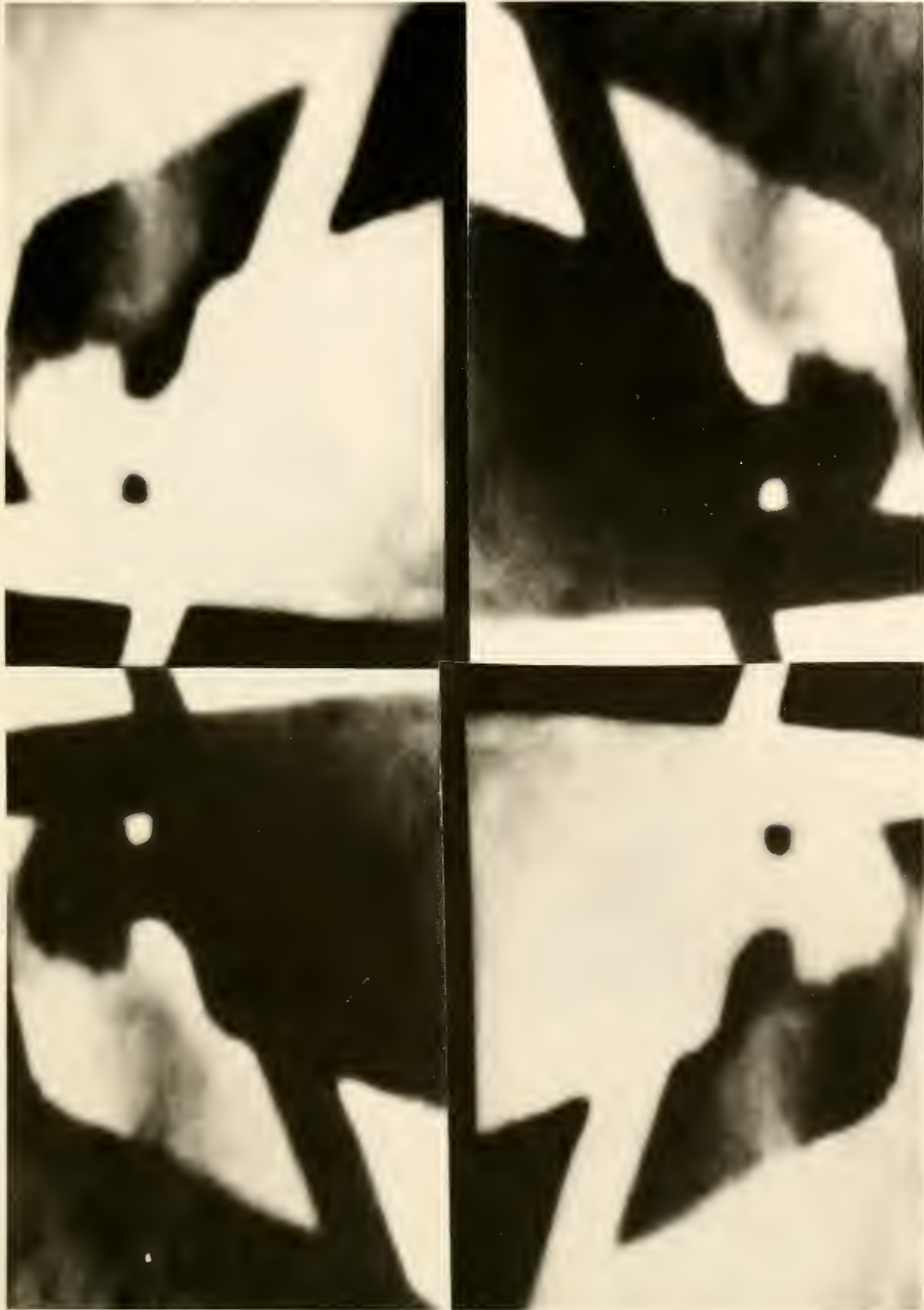
Caroline Head

Unmoving butterflies
and uneaten fruit
forever watched by the
rabbit's eyes,
frozen in death.

Vibrant flowers
alone on an urn
on which run two
flower-gatherers,
frozen in life.

Petals are screaming
the glory of morning.
Susans are winking
button-black eyes,
and dragons snapping at the butterfly
suspended in flight,
benevolent.

*Honorable Mention, Poetry
Muse Contest*



*Photograph by Helen Spruill
Honorable Mention, Art
Muse Contest*

THE COLOR RED

Elizabeth Evans

The hot sensuality of red
is the sophisticated honesty
of the Machiavellian lions
of this world.

It parches the skin with the
spitting heat of the cool,
unyielding sun.

In the dark blackness of the
night, the owl wears
feathers tarnished with
a deep crimson hue.

Wars that drape history in
a tapestry of blood
burn and crackle under the
shadow of a compulsive revenge
that is bittersweet to the tongue.

As the sultry night opens
to my eyes a scarlet dawn,
my curious hate for adulthood
is no longer a mystery.

*Honorable Mention, Poetry
Muse Contest*



Pencil Drawing by Marbury Patrick

ANGELS

Laura Ann Slaughter

from the gasoline-scented pier
I look out into the darkness
of the sky

the river
a dark mint-green
in Apollo's light
is now a flat piece of onyx

the sky
part of a stained-glass window,
blue
as the blue around Jesus's yellow hair
on a sun-lit Sunday morning

the moon caught
in the corner of my vision
across sinister black water
spreads open
a creamy path of light, color
of an iridescent seashell
that seems only meant
for ivory-skinned angels
singing softly
on the way home

*Second Place, Poetry
Muse Contest*

“WINTER LIGHT: STOCK TRACKS”

By William Dunlap

Jill Sparks

The sky, a bedspread of pink that slowly
covers the western horizon.
A farm yard with two red barns snuggling
in the whitely-fallen snow,
their roofs white with black shadows from
the nightfall's invasion.
Trees of death linger, bare, with icicles
dangling from their frozen limbs.
Patches of small footprints trail to the
ice-broken pond with water endlessly dark.

*Honorable Mention, Poetry
Muse Contest*



*"Rasta" by Carol Laney
Third Place, Art
Muse Contest*

DEPARTURES

by Laura Wyrick

In her mind, he stood by the door. Like a passenger standing on a platform, he seemed to be waiting for a signal. The heavy suitcase set by his feet seemed like a huge brown brick. "Wait," she wanted to call, but in the hot, sticky atmosphere of the dream, her words drowned, sinking down through the air, weighed to the floor. Through the haze in the living room, she saw the lights of the Christmas tree cutting the mist, signalling her. Time seemed suspended and her steps were too slow to reach the door in time to stop him. Still dreaming, Meredith turned over restlessly, and her pillow became smudged with mascara as her tears melted through the makeup.

Standing by the door, James heard his wife's restlessness, but no reflection of emotion clouded his face. The suitcase was already in the car, and the map sat on top of the suitcase on the passenger's side. The suitcase did not contain all of his clothes, just a few changes until he would be able to send for the rest, assuming that Meredith didn't burn them, he thought wryly.

Surveying the living room, he thought that leaving wasn't nearly as difficult as he had thought that it would be. Sure, he hated leaving at Christmas, but there were plenty of presents under the tree for Carol and John. There were even a couple for Meredith, although he doubted she would want them very much. The most important gift, though, was the quiet house that he was going to give Carol and John. They would never have to dread the shouting which seemed to almost always announce his homecoming. They would never have to be tired in school because he and Meredith had argued late into the night the night before. And maybe they would never have to see the incredible violence of Meredith's temper, which she was careful never to turn on the children. Yes, this would be the present the children would most appreciate later, even though they would resent his leaving. Still, he hoped the new bicycle and the "My Little Pony" playset would help ease the hurt. He knew that no gifts could smoothe over the pain he would cause Meredith. Well, it was better this way. He owed them all at least the attempt to make life better.

So now it was time to leave. His hand shaking, he turned the fake crystal doorknob quietly so the clicking was not loud. Stepping through the doorway, he reached back to switch the lights off. Accidentally, his hand brushed against the small, framed cross-stitch picture of a house Meredith had made years ago, early in their marriage. The light wooden frame fell to the hardwood floor with a noise which seemed to him sufficient to be heard across town. His first instinct was to run—to close the door and run to the car. But twenty-three years of respon-

sibility kept him rooted firmly in the doorway, waiting in dread for the footsteps that he knew must come.

From the bedroom, he heard her soft voice questioning, "James? Are you all right?"

He wanted so badly to say, "It's nothing, dear, go back to bed." But that would be the coward's way. Instead, he said gently, "Meredith, maybe you should come out here for a moment."

He heard the rustling as she got out of bed, and soon she appeared across the room, her face lined by soft wrinkles and lines from the pillow. He wondered if she viewed him the same way he saw her—soft and getting old. She was still beautiful; time had not aged the color of new straw that was her hair. The green of her eyes was still the color of the ocean early in the morning. The softening of her skin and the slight weight gain didn't make her ugly to him, just older and sadder. He knew that the brown of his hair and eyes were likewise untouched. Rubbing his hand on his stomach, he felt the extra pounds which age had bequeathed him.

Meredith seemed unsurprised by the fact that her husband was dressed at one in the morning. Instead, her expression showed only a bitter disappointment, as though he had failed her. It was the look James had come to expect and hate. To hide his rising feelings of inferiority, he snapped, "I'll send for my clothes soon."

Hurt and defensive, she said, "Would it ruin your great secret getaway to take them now?"

Arguing to the end, he thought unhappily. Nothing's changed. If we ever did anything right, I would have liked to end it gracefully. With an effort, he ignored her question and said apologetically, "I'm sorry, Meredith. We'll talk later."

"Sure. You don't have to tell the kids. It's easy to run."

Cheap shot, he thought, though he let that pass, too.

"Daddy, where are you going?" The young, high voice startled both the adults. Turning, James saw Carol standing gravely in the door leading from the children's rooms.

What do I say, he thought hopelessly. Surprised, he heard Meredith's voice answer, "Daddy's going away for a while. Run and kiss him goodbye."

"What about Christmas?"

James said, "I'll talk to you on Christmas; I just won't be able to see you."

Carol turned and ran from the room, leaving James and Meredith staring after her. But soon she returned, carrying a heavy package.

"Here, Daddy, from Santa. Well, from me, anyway."

"Thank you, darling."

James lifted the box lid off the unwrapped gift to reveal a heavy photograph album. Sitting on the arm of the sofa in a manner he knew Meredith hated ("You'll break the arm off"), he propped the album open on one knee. Flipping through the pages brought back memories of events he had long forgotten. From last Christmas, he saw the snowman which he had helped the kids make, but which had melted the day before Christmas. On the next page was a picture of the costumes he and Meredith had worn to a New Year's Eve costume party. He was a big fluffy rooster and she was dressed as a hen. He remembered how the feathers kept drooping in his eyes and how she would blow them out of the way and then give him a quick kiss each time. His smile faded as he remembered, also, how she had drunk far too much and ended the evening with an ugly argument, after which she had hurled glasses at him from their friends' kitchen. He remembered also her hangover the next day, and how she had broken the antique box he had given her as she held onto the sink for balance as she threw up. When he had expressed some regret over the box, she had become furious and broken every vase in the room but one.

Still, the last picture in the album was a picture taken during a ski vacation he and Meredith had taken one February. Looking at the picture, he could remember the way the light on the snow was blue in the late afternoon. He remembered that these were the happiest three weeks he had ever had in his life. Looking up at Meredith, he saw the younger wife he remembered from the vacation.

"Mommy helped me make it." The voice broke through his thoughts cleanly like a scalpel. Thoughtfully, he closed the album and stood up, tripping a little as the feeling returned to his legs. Although she was across the room, Meredith automatically reached out her arm to catch him. Smiling a little, James walked across the room and hugged Carol and then Meredith. Trying not to see the grudging hope in Meredith's face, he kissed her forehead. He did love her, and the ache in his chest had already started; but it was not the ache of love, only the ache of the anticipated pain of missing her.

"James . . ." Meredith began. She stopped as he shook his head.

Without looking back, James walked through the open door and into the hall. Still looking towards the car and hugging the photo album close to his chest as though for security, he pulled the door closed behind him. The album seemed warm, as though the memories and feelings inside were heating the plastic imitation-leather of the cover. For a moment, he considered walking back through the door. Meredith would still be in the room. He could make it better, use the old familiar apology, "Darling, I'm so sorry. I know I missed your thoughts totally. I'll make it better." But something stopped him, and he knew that it wasn't pride or anything as shallow as a sense of satisfaction at her pain. It was only the knowledge that he was doing, to the best of his ability, the right thing. The sun glinted cheerfully off the car in front of him, and although he did not feel half as cheerful as the car, it reassured him a bit as he unlocked and opened the door.

*Laura Wyrick
First Place, Prose
Muse Contest*



Pencil Drawing by Karen Muller

DAVID'S NOSE

Caroline Head

Stretched beyond
green pools of love
in which I often happily drown,
freckled by tan ant hills,
straight as a highway that leads
to twin lush gardens of rose
speaking his sincerity.

FOR BRYANT

Ruth Dobson

I ate the ice cream;
the taste was grand and
the cold weather added spice.
I enjoyed eating the dreaded calories.
What a delight to eat a cone—
and swallow
and breathe.
I ate the cream and remembered his death;
I ate as my own heart melted.



"Shower" by Tomomi Watanabe

HOLIDAY INN

by *Caroline Head*

He stumbled aimlessly through the green-carpeted halls of the Holiday Inn, carrying his shoes and a beer. From his greasy, bottle-brush hair to his unpatched socks, he reeked of liquor and loneliness. His clouded eyes focused on several couples in formal dress heading toward the ballroom. He followed the laughing group several paces behind, sipping his beer thoughtfully, his feet padding on the carpet.

He entered the ballroom as unobtrusively as possible and stood at the wall for several minutes, surveying the scene. College kids crowded the dance floor, their bodies pulsing to the music, eyes glittering with ecstasy. He continued his study of the scene, unnoticed by the group; they were all too caught up in the mood and the music to see the middle-aged man who watched them. Eventually, his bleary eyes shifted to a couple sitting twenty feet away from the crowd, drinking ice water and waiting for a slow song to end so that they could release their pent-up energy. He approached them, tripping over his own feet, and stopped directly in front of them. Their conversation stopped immediately, and they looked at him curiously.

"Are y'all together?" he asked in a slow, low-country drawl. The girl just looked at him blankly, but the boy said, mimicking the man's accent, "Well, yassir, we are." The girl tried visibly not to giggle, and the man continued to look at them expectantly, although his eyes were not focusing clearly on their faces. After nudging the girl, the boy added in a proud tone, "We're engaged." The girl beamed and tucked her hand into the crook of the boy's elbow conspiratorially to emphasize the idea. The man's jaw dropped, and his red eyes opened wide. He was silent in his amazement for a few minutes, then he said in an awestruck tone, "That's BEEYOOTIFULL!" After shifting his drink into the same hand that carefully held the shoes, he wiped his hand on his grimy pants. Once he felt that it was sufficiently clean, he held it out to the boy, who was looking profoundly disgusted. Before the boy could shake the offered hand, the man retracted it and held it to his nose and sniffed it, then extended it again. The boy copied his actions exactly and the girl laughed openly.

Before the man could engage them in conversation, as he so obviously wanted to do, the couple excused themselves to get another drink. They walked away laughing, and he watched them go. The boy's arm around the girl's waist caught his eye, but neither of them returned his gaze. He watched them mingle with the other dancing bodies for a few minutes.

Just as he was lighting a cigarette, a uniformed man approached him and said, "Buddy, you'll have to leave. This is a closed party." The uniformed man looked dis-

tinctly unfriendly, so he didn't try to talk to him, but left unhurriedly. He ambled along the narrow hallways until he finished his drink, and decided to go outside for some fresh air; he was feeling a little hot and queasy.

First he wandered around the parking lot filled with empty cars and pulled his collar up around his neck against the breeze. Then he stopped to put his shoes on when he reached the grass that led to the street. The cool air was helping the buzzing in his head, and he felt a little bit better. He meandered down the street with his hands in his pockets, and stopped at Burger King for a cup of coffee. When the girl at the counter said, "That'll be 57 cents, sir," he delved into his pockets and came up with nothing but lint. He was indignant and apologetic at the same time. "Someone stole my wallet!" he shrieked. "I know I had it earlier, but I don't think I left it in the room, and someone stole it, I know. I can't believe this; this has never happened to me . . ." his voice trailed off listlessly as the girl handed him the cup and said, "Don't worry about it."

"Look ma'am, I promise I'll come back. Let me just go look in my room. I'm staying at the Holiday Inn, and I'll bring you the money; I have it, you know," he drawled, but not so slowly as before. This was important to him. He didn't want the pretty young girl behind the counter to think he was a hood. She looked almost like what he expected his daughter would have looked like by now. She said, "No, really, it's quite alright. Don't worry about it," but he went, practically running, out of the restaurant, promising he'd be back.

"Old drunk," the girl said with repulsion.

The man went off in the direction of the Holiday Inn, happy now that he had something to do. He was almost at the hotel, in the parking lot, when he remembered that he didn't have a room; he had checked out that morning. He walked among the empty cars, kicking the tires of the nicer ones in frustration. He relieved himself on the tire of a BMW, and leaned on the hood of a Lincoln. As he tried to keep from crying, he happened to see the couple he saw earlier.

They were dancing wildly in their fifth floor room, and he could see them clearly. Every now and then, the boy would pull the girl to him and kiss her, and the man could almost feel their laughter. He felt as if they were mocking him with it, with their happiness. He remembered vaguely that they hadn't even looked back at him, and wondered painfully if they had given him a second thought.

He had to pay that girl at Burger King back; he just had to! Suddenly, he was struck with a plan; his fogged mind could not quite work out the details, but he knew

what to do. The light in the window on the fifth floor flickered out, and the curtains closed. He knew what they were doing, and it infuriated him somehow. It had been so long for him . . . twenty-five years in jail. As if he hadn't suffered enough, he thought. He made a mental note of the location of the room, and sat under a street lamp to wait.

After a good half-hour, he decided the time was right. He went to the fifth floor and found the room he was looking for. After noting the number, he went downstairs to the front desk to get a duplicate key to the room. However, he realized that the staff would probably recognize him, so he broke into the maids' closet to get the master key instead of dealing with the front desk. He knew where the key would be kept, because he'd slept with one of the maids a few nights ago, right after he'd gotten out, and she had done nothing but describe the details of her job to him. It had turned out that he couldn't even get it up, so he'd lain in bed with his head on her shoulder, crying, while she talked about how hard her job was.

He walked confidently up the stairs to the fifth floor, his mind still focused on getting the money, and paying back the cute little cashier at Burger King. He had to pay her back; he had to prove himself.

After listening at the door for a couple of minutes and making sure that no one was coming down the hall, he quietly opened the door. The boy and the girl inside didn't wake up because they were out cold. The light was on in the bathroom, and he let his eyes adjust to the darkness.

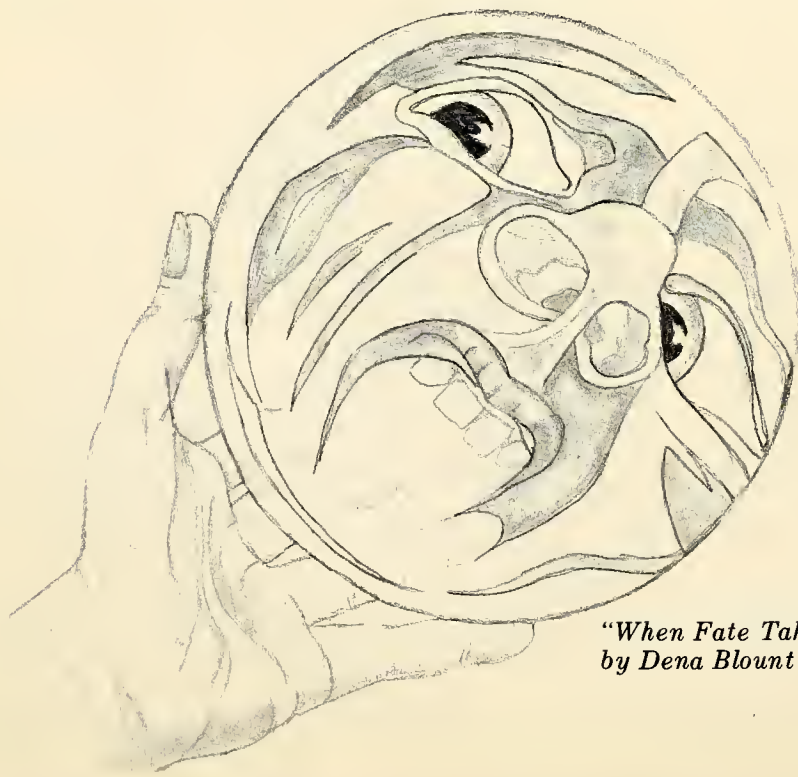
He was alert and his adrenaline was pumping. His head began to pound with the beating of his heart, and he steadied himself for a moment.

After a couple of minutes, he saw a wallet on the dresser right in front of him. There was a stirring from the bed, and he held his breath, but eventually he figured they were asleep. He reached out and grabbed the wallet.

He left quickly, not bothering to lock the door behind him. He was elated as he ran down the stairs. He peeked into the wallet and saw several crisp bills. Then he went into a bar to have a few celebratory drinks on his way to Burger King. He left when it closed at two a.m. He couldn't quite remember what it was he'd wanted to do for a minute, but when he stepped outside and saw the gold and red Burger King sign, he began to run. He stumbled and fell in his haste, but picked himself up. His mind was concentrated on maintaining his honor; he continued to hurry toward the restaurant. When he finally got there, after tripping and picking himself up several times, the door was locked. He pounded on it in frustration for a few minutes, then decided to slip the money under the door. But when he reached into his pocket for the wallet, he found it wasn't there.

He stood, stunned, for only a moment. Then he took his shoes off and began to run. Once he lost his footing and fell face first into a ditch, and just lay there for several hours. But when he finally crawled out and began to run again in earnest, he could feel that it was forever that he was running towards, and that when he got there, it would be gone.

Caroline Head
Honorable Mention, Prose
Muse Contest



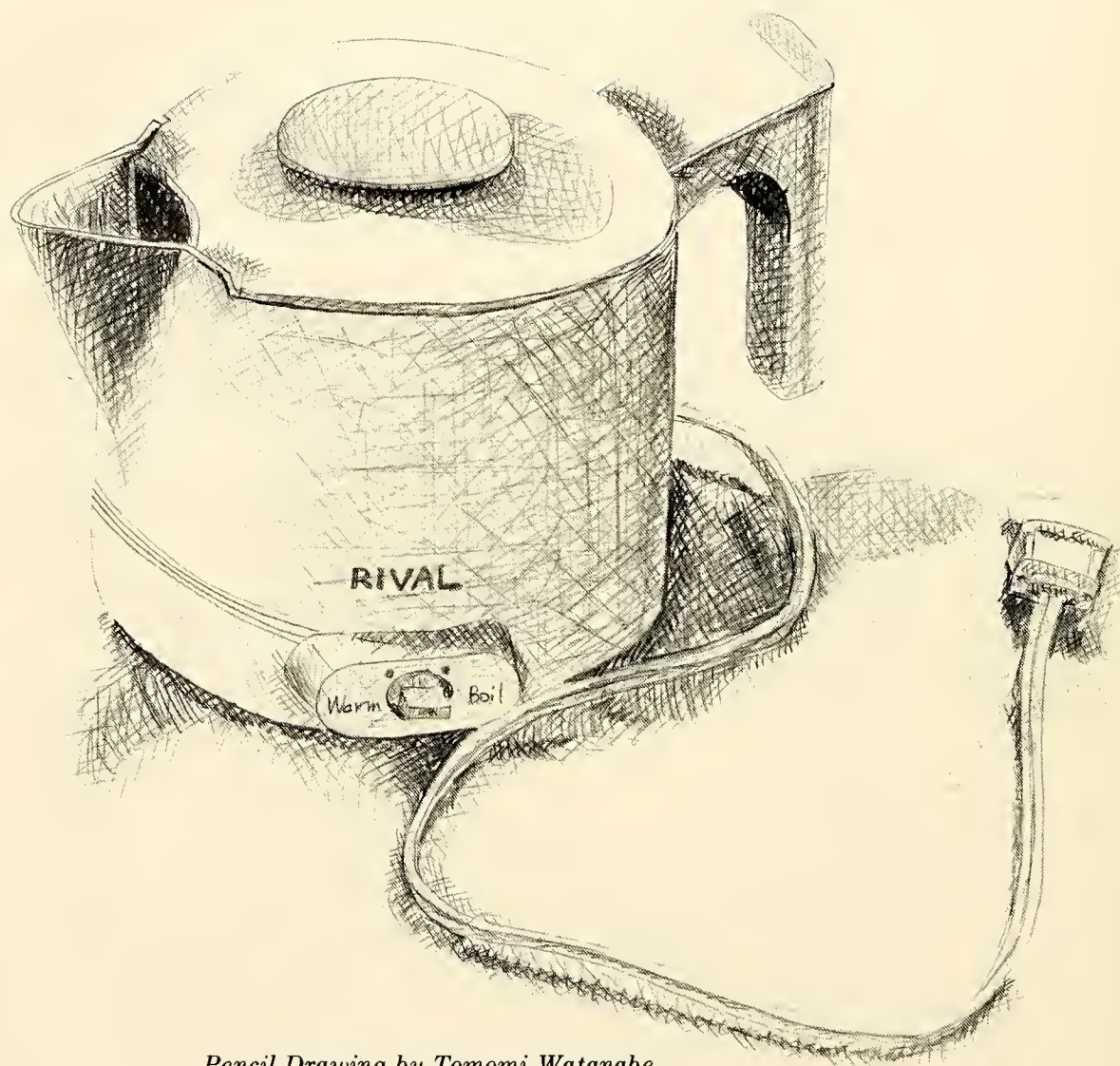
"When Fate Takes A Hand"
by Dena Blount

**AFTER A PAINTING BY
WILLIAM BOARDMAN:
"ADIRONDALE LANDSCAPE"**

Laura Wyrick

Three horsemen standing next to water.
They pause for a moment in their travel
to confer, perhaps, though their whispers
are too soft for me to hear.
Unaware of omniscient gods who watch,
too small in their world
to notice the bright cellophane
wrapping-paper-blue of the sky,
the metallic mercury surface
of the water,
or the secret greens
of surrounding forest.
Too absorbed, complacent
to see, they are confined
to their tableau,
their blindness of the interior
matched only by their ignorance of the exterior.
I am angry to be so invisible,
wishing to tear their small
frame of existence apart.
I know these horsemen,
though they would not fit
into the picture.
So I do nothing,
no acts of violence
or frustration.
Instead, I let them forget
the mystery of the trees,
let them forget the iceberg mountains
rising like silent giants
behind them.

*Third Place, Poetry
Muse Contest*



Pencil Drawing by Tomomi Watanabe

SHE

by Mary Tyler Fore

Methodically, she watched the smoke from her cigarette rise lazily upward in a stream of ringlets, adding to the fog that already filled the room. Music blared through the room, but all she could hear was the slow thudding of her twenty-year-old heart. The flames of the candles on her bedside table licked the air greedily. She watched, mesmerized. Slowly, she glanced around the room, unconcerned by its slovenly state. It was moments like this that she treasured so much. It was her time to be alone and soul-search. She was amazed at how much she learned about herself. Today, her thoughts revolved specifically on her life. What did the future hold for her? Where was her life going, and after all, where had it been? Was there a reason for her existence? Was there an overall plan? She was reminded of riding the carousel when she was five years old. Her dad stood at her side while they went round and round. The whimsical music floated through her mind. She saw that brass ring glistening as it did that day, fifteen years ago, when she had tried desperately to reach it, but a young brown-headed boy had reached it before she could. Was that what she was supposed to wait for? Was there a brass ring that she was ultimately going to get, which would put her life in perspective and give it direction? She hated it when she got like this! She could debate this for hours, but just like many times before, she would find no answers for all her questions. A couple of hours had passed since she had heard the phone ring last. Lazily, she had let the answering machine take all her calls, not wanting to be interrupted. She decided that it was time to escape this mood that had slowly enveloped her. She figured that she had better go listen to the messages. Unfortunately, the answering machine informed her that she was going to have to be a real human being today. She was going to have to walk out of her front door into reality. Scott had called. Scott was, she guessed, the new guy in her life or a pain in the ass, whichever; they were interchangeable. Scott could be summed up in one sentence. He was a surfing, pick-up-truck-driving bricklayer with pale blue eyes that made her melt at the slightest glance. Although she questioned her feelings for Scott, she knew there was something about him that kept her intrigued. She wondered if Scott would turn out to be someone special. Would he be the one, "Mr. Right," "Prince Charming," or would he just be another one of those little boys who loved to play games with her head? As she listened to his voice drone on and on monotonously on the answering machine, she began to fantasize about what life with Scott would be like. She could see it now. Scott's pick-up truck, which once shone like new, now sat rust-covered and grungy in front of their dilapidated house. Scott, of course, had never been promoted in his business. He was

still a bricklayer. Money had gotten scarce ever since Tyler, their son, was born. Tyler was born in Scott's image. He even had those pale blue eyes that would send a young girl's head reeling in a few years, much the same way Scott's eyes had affected her. Her brain was going to turn to mush because she could not work until Tyler was old enough to go to school. All those years of school gone to waste! She would sit on the tattered, puke-green couch watching soap operas with a kaleidoscope-colored quilt resting on her legs while Tyler played with Lincoln logs on the floor. Scott would be working out back, stocking his truck and swilling beer. His once-lean, muscular abdomen would long ago have been replaced by an unmistakable beer gut. At that moment, she stopped herself. It was too awful to even imagine. It wouldn't be like that, would it? There was no way that all of the hours she spent wondering about her future were to be wasted on a life that should have been a movie of the week. She was determined that this was not to be the case. She was awakened from this grim fantasy by the shrill trilling of the phone. Unclenching her fists, her knuckles white with tension, she picked up the receiver. She heard her mother's nagging voice on the other end. Her mother, Betty, was the last person on earth that she wanted to hear from at that moment. God, her mother sounded like a broken record. It was the same old shit, different day.

Betty was an overworked, fifty-two-year-old woman who, for reasons unknown, was always broke, not to mention always on the rebound from a relationship with a man who had done her wrong. However, she would never see Joe Shmoe's flaws, because she would let the pain of rejection blind her. Her mother never got a break in life and frequently felt the need to call her daughter up and tell her all about it. Ever since Betty had hit menopause, she was obviously having an identity crisis. All anyone had to do was look at her. She was a short woman sporting a good figure, with a swarm of dyed blond hair that enveloped her face; long tendrils of it hung down past her shoulders. Although she had always had good taste and dressed in style, her wardrobe was more suited to that of a twenty-five-year-old. She wore everything ranging from go-go boots to mini-skirts. Did anyone understand what it was like to be seen in public with a woman almost three times older than she was, but who looked ten times better than she herself looked? Her mother was grasping desperately at anything youthful. It made her so angry to feel that she had to compete with her mother in front of her peers. As her mother Betty blabbed on incessantly about the terrible week that she had had, she let the receiver fall limply in her hand and allowed her mind to wander. Was this what the future held? Was she going to end up like her mother? God, she hoped not! She glanced

down at her hands that were obsessively twisting the phone cord between their fingers. To her dismay, she saw her mother's hands in exact replicas, except for her nails which were bitten down to the quick. It terrified her to think that as she got older she might resemble her mother more and more. She thanked God every day that she resembled her father so much. Finally, she couldn't listen to her mother's whining anymore, so she made some excuse about having to go somewhere. But really, where did she have to go? Slamming the receiver down, relieved, she stretched out on the floor and smoked another cigarette. Why worry? she thought. She'd probably die of lung cancer before too long, anyway. Taking the last drag of her cigarette and crushing it out in the ashtray which was thickly coated with butts, she forced herself into the shower. As she steeped under the spewing water, she noticed the extra weight that had obnoxiously found its way to her waist and thighs. It only made her determination to lose it more intense. She stood under the shower spigot, letting the spray pound her scalp, rendering her immobile as she leaned against the cold tile. Finally tearing her limp body away from the relaxing spray, she walked into her room, stepping over

the pile of clothes that she had previously thrown on the floor. She got dressed, throwing on the first thing that she came to in her closet. She dried her long blond hair that she was sure was getting thinner due to stress. Then she applied a little bit of make-up. She never wore much. Taking a final look in the full-length mirror, she decided she would do. After all, it was not like she had somewhere to go or someone to impress. Then, after considering the outside chance that today would be the day that someone or something important would enter her life, she applied a little more mascara and lip gloss. Then she grabbed her bag off of the chair and her keys from the top of the TV set. She walked out of the door, locking it behind her. Just as she was pulling her key roughly from the lock, she heard the faint ringing of the phone. She walked away with no desire, and not even enough curiosity, to rush back inside to catch the call. As she walked away, she wondered if that phone call could have been something important. Maybe someone on the other end had all the answers to her questions. She knew that she was kidding herself and turned onto the street, becoming invisible among the crowds. She was on her way somewhere, but where and for what reason?

*Mary Tyler Fore
Third Place, Prose
Muse Contest*



"Schroeder" by Sarah Stevens

YOU WERE WEARING

Ashleigh Vick

You were wearing your John Lennon printed denim jacket.
In each divided-up section of the jacket was a different
face of John Lennon.

Your hair was long and you were unique. You asked me,
"Are we too much after our time?"

I smelled the hippie oil of your dingy basement apartment
on your hair not held in place by a Janis Joplin silver
butterfly.

"No," I said, "Our time is too much before us." Then we
braided our hair

and danced in a small dark room until the back of your
Jerry Garcia, god of the sixties, tie-dye was sweaty.

Strange roommate was swaying alone in the bedroom/den with
his Jimi Hendrix bandana around his forehead.

We watched for a second then the music got us, too.

Fluorescent saucers with soldiers dying to get in,
dancing on the ceiling

and flying illustrations from the book, *The Electric Kool-
Aid Acid Test* and from the biography, *Dead-Heads Unite*.

A girlfriend emerged, wearing her Joan Baez dress: "How
about a party, anyone?"

I whispered to you, "Let's go to the moon!" We ran out
into the street and sat on top of the Sonny Bono van,
wishing for the moon.

You saw the isolation, beauty, and freedom part, and I saw
the light.

In the trash across the street we heard an old beggar with
a rusty shopping cart banging against the image of
Martin Luther King, Jr.



"Obsessive" by Kathy Clarke

AFTER A PAINTING BY EUGENE BELMAN
"SUNSET" (MEDUSA)

Laura Ann Slaughter

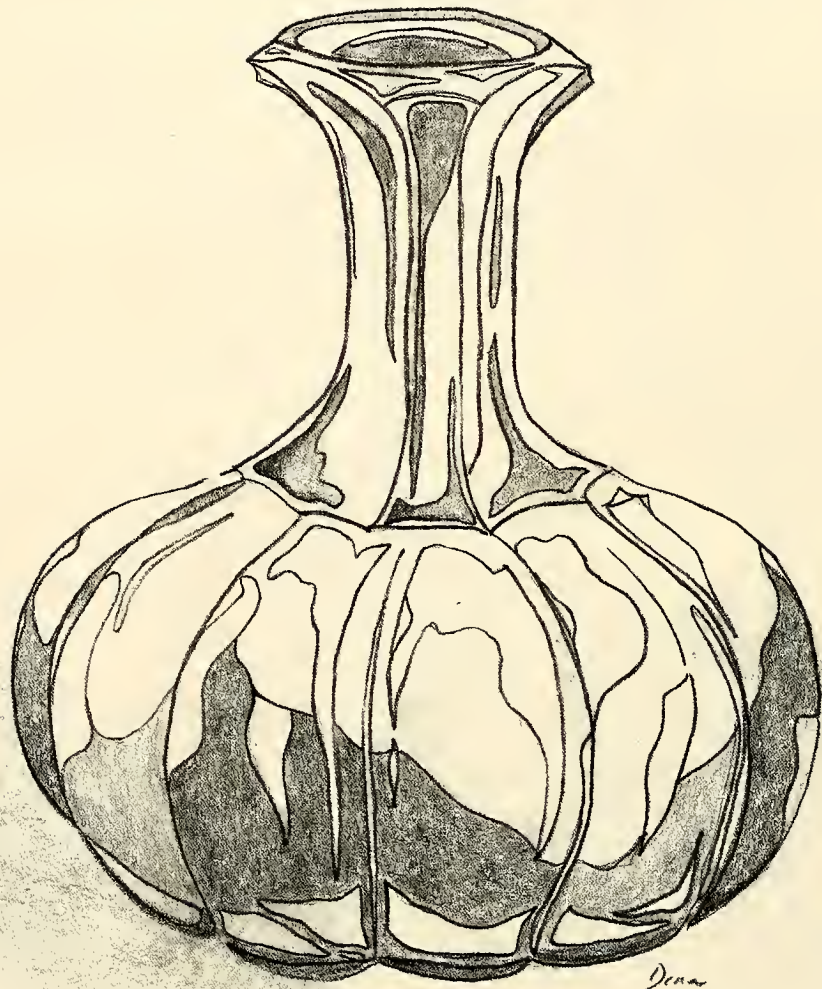
Medusa weeps.
Mildew-green walls trap her.
The water stains, acid-green,
hang on to decaying walls
like threads of a broken spider web.

Medusa will not look up.
She rests her cheeks
upon black-brown wool.
She hides
under a veil of gold hair
that does not shine
like the sunset.

The cut-out
in the wall
is forgotten.
She turns herself away
from the blue-lit circle
that cradles the moon.

Over her head
hangs a gray sphere.
A rope like a necklace,
frayed and curled,
hangs
like delicate child hair.

Medusa will not look.
She refuses to breathe the dead air.
Her fingers,
long and snake-like,
grasp her skeleton body
that will not move.



Pencil Drawing by Dena Blount

DECEPTIONS

by Cheryl Emery

I was the little girl with chubby fingers clenched tightly about Winnie the Pooh's arm, waiting on the 747 jet to land in Cincinnati, Ohio. I was going to see my Dad, the man with the black hair in the picture on my bedside table. As I inhaled that nauseating, pressured air through tiny nostrils, I thought about what I would say to him, what he would look like. The plane skidded down the runway and landed. Half-excited and half-nervous, I pranced through the tunnel from the airplane to my gate, expecting my Dad to be the first person I saw, anxiously awaiting my arrival. Wrong. I waited with a stewardess for twenty-five minutes, terrified that my father had forgotten about me.

He finally showed up in his usual attire, still looking like a college boy: soft faded Levi jeans, a washed-out Izod shirt with the alligator that curled up at the head and tail, and tan, suede Wallabies. He held in one hand a Camel unfiltered cigarette; the other hand rested inside a pocket of his jeans. The silver buckle of his alligator skin belt was scratched and worn so that his initials were scarcely legible.

I squeezed Winnie tighter and tighter as he approached. He came and patted me on the head and said, "Hey, B.Z. We have to hurry. We're already late for dinner. I made reservations at the Maisonette."

I remembered that restaurant from my last visit. I had felt pretty, even though my velvet dress was uncomfortable and my hair felt funny. Dad's girlfriend had not fixed my pony tail the same way Mom did. I had sat between those grown-ups in that big round booth feeling very awkward. Now I hoped that it would not be that way again.

We swiftly zoomed away in Dad's white BMW. The stereo made my heart bump against my ribs. We drove to Dad's townhouse and quickly changed into more formal clothes. I fixed my own hair this time and my dress wasn't that uncomfortable. Dad looked so handsome in his red tie, and when he smiled, I did not feel as nervous. The excitement of what was to come made me feel less awkward. On the way to the restaurant, we picked up Joanne, Dad's girlfriend. She was pretty, with long black hair like Mom's. I sat through dinner, content with just listening to Dad and Joanne talk to each other. I did not have anything to say, so why should they talk to me?

On the way home, Dad told me that in the morning he was going to take me to the zoo and that we would pack lunches and have a picnic. I was happy, but worried about the time we would have to spend together alone. What would I say? Maybe Joanne would go, too.

As we pulled up to the townhouse, there were lots of cars parked up and down Dad's street. He mentioned to me that he had a surprise waiting inside. As we walked in

the door, grown-ups that I did not recognize yelled, "Surprise!" It did not seem as if they were talking to me, but Dad said they were. He took me around the room and introduced me to everyone. They could not believe how cute I was and how much Dad and I looked alike. I couldn't understand that at all. How could Dad and I look alike?

After I met everyone, Dad disappeared into the crowd and I was left behind. No one knew what to say to me. They could only tell me that I was pretty and ask me how old I was. I sat on the edge of the couch while the grown-ups talked above the music. I decided to go to my room, which was Dad's office. The room looked as if it belonged in a movie, so I played "Charlie's Angels." I swung around and around in Dad's big desk chair. The leather was so soft and the chair so big that I drifted off to sleep. I woke up in the middle of the night with a blanket on top of me. I guess that Dad had found me. Feeling very neglected and afraid of the dark, I stumbled over to my bed, which was folded out of the suede couch, and eventually fell asleep again.

I woke the next morning, expecting Dad to be up, but he wasn't. I finally found a clock; it was 10 a.m., and I wondered when Dad was going to take me to the zoo. I couldn't go back to sleep and I was very hungry, so I tried to find something to eat. I ended up just munching on dry cereal because there wasn't any milk. After eating, I decided that since it was 11 a.m., I would go and try to wake Dad up, but I couldn't get down the spiral staircase because it was blocked by a baby gate that he had put up the night before. I ended by waiting for him in the den with nothing to do but sit with Winnie. I couldn't figure out how to turn on the television. It was on a high shelf of the bookcase.

Dad finally appeared in his navy-and-red-striped terry cloth robe at noon. He apologized for sleeping late and made me toast for breakfast. We went to the zoo after all, without lunches. Dad said he wasn't feeling very well and wasn't hungry. I guessed that I could wait until dinner to eat.

I only stayed with him another day because I had school on Monday. I left him just as I always had, with an empty feeling in my stomach and regret that things hadn't changed. I felt as if I were a lot of trouble to my father. I was afraid of him — afraid of making him angry by disappointing him. I only made him smile when he picked me up at the airport and when he dropped me off there. These trips to see my father were the same over and over again. They were empty visits full of questions like, "How are you doing in school, B.Z.?", "How is your mother, B.Z.?", and "What would you like for your birthday?" These questions made my stomach and heart feel

more hollow and neglected than ever.

I am now seventeen and the roles are reversed. I haven't seen my father in four years. Now I am waiting on his plane. He is flying in for my graduation. I'm not late, but ten minutes early. No longer do I hold Winnie the Pooh with chubby fingers; I now hold my pocketbook. My father walks in line with the rest of the people on his plane, looking handsome and charming in a business suit and a bright red tie. He smiles, tells me how beautiful I have become and how proud he is of me. I don't understand how he can be proud of me for something I can't control. I still don't feel as if I have accomplished anything. We drive away in my red Fiat Spider with the top down, looking like a young couple. I look older than seventeen, and he much younger than thirty-nine.

We go to dinner. I pick a French restaurant, hoping that he will approve, but he says nothing about it. We actually carry on a conversation this time.

"So, where have you applied to go to college, B.Z.?", he says.

"I have sent applications mainly to small girls' schools," I reply.

"Why? I don't understand. I think you need to go to a large university. You don't need to waste your time at a small girls' school. They don't offer half as much as far as course selection is concerned, and you would be very unhappy being so isolated. You need to send an application to the University of Maryland, or the University of Georgia if your grades aren't adequate," he says, without expecting me to reply.

I decide that I should finally stand up to him. I am very insulted by his thinking that I am too incompetent to choose a college to go to. With tears in my eyes, I say, "I don't appreciate your sudden attempt at being a father to me. I decided on the schools to apply to without you, and I

can decide which school to go to without you, too. I am sick and tired of trying to please you. I am tired of being neglected by you and then, when we do see each other, I don't appreciate being ordered around. I am not seven years old any more. If you're trying to be a father to me now, then you're a little late." By now I am very upset and go to the ladies' room to collect myself. When I come back, I am afraid to say anything to him. Our food arrives and we don't speak throughout the entire meal. When we get into the car, he tells me that continuing the evening will be pointless, so I am to take him to his hotel. He says that he will be at my graduation the next morning and will catch a plane afterwards.

My stomach is no longer empty. At least I have opened up and let him know how I have been feeling for so many years. I go to sleep that night, wondering what will happen the next day with both my mother and father in the same place together. They have not seen each other since their divorce thirteen years ago. I am worried about how it will turn out.

The next morning I sit on stage with the rest of the senior class, half-listening to one of the speakers and half-scanning the audience of seven hundred people, trying to find my father. I suddenly notice one of the doors to the auditorium opening in the back. It is my father, twenty minutes late this time. He has a big smile on his face, sees me, and waves discreetly. I happen to be seated on the front row. I have butterflies in my stomach, anticipating the award I know I am getting for some of my performances in drama. My father will finally learn what I am interested in and what my accomplishments are. I am excited about being able to introduce him to my friends at the reception. He is, after all, so young-looking and so handsome.

*Cheryl Emery
Second Place, Prose
Muse Contest*

CHILDHOOD

Laura Wyrick

In memory,
the days of childhood
seem to blend together,
the corners blurred by a certain sameness.
I never hated school.
To me, the unwashed, pumpkin-colored bus
was no more dreaded
than the prospect of an empty shell
of a house.
Running up the front steps
on my porch after school,
I closed my eyes as I stepped over the doorway,
feeling somehow that the green door
was swallowing me,
a requisite victim of live burial.
All colors seem covered with dust
even in memory.
The cheerful, bloody reds
of the construction paper mittens I cut out
for Christmas
have faded to a pale,
washed-out wine color, the sort of shade
an old stain might leave upon a carpet,
the shade of autumn maples preparing for winter.
I used to climb the tree
in our backyard while my mother screamed
at me to get down.
I smiled as the top wobbled unsteadily
under my gentle weight.
It was nothing but blind luck
that the tree didn't throw me to the ground
waiting below, but I didn't mind danger
because when I was afraid,
I felt something,
and escaped the days all identical.



*"The Unknown" by Elizabeth Allen
Honorable Mention, Art
Muse Contest*

DREAMLESS

Laura Ann Slaughter

My eyes have yellowed
like a newspaper
kept too long
for some forgotten reason.
They have become stale
from too many years
and straight drinks.

As I look into a scratched, dusty mirror
through cigarette smoke,
I remember those eyes
that belonged to another man.

A man with taut, clean-shaven cheeks
and blood-flushed, tan skin,
looking into a sun-filled crowd.
In 1945
he was a hero,
and the crowds had come to kiss his ass
for allowing men to die,
leaving their gun-cold bodies
on virgin-white beaches
like sunbathers
lining the beach, slabs of cooked meat.

I saw Hiroshima
one gray day.
It was nothing but barren land
the color of Asian skin,
a graveyard with no tombstones,
except the rubble.

I took a photograph
that day with my cronies.
We were laughing
as kids do,
not recognizing the cruel magic of the bomb
until ship-tanned skin
became the white-gray color of the sky.

Now I live in hidden, sweaty, aged hotels
living off money that comes from nowhere.
My old fish eyes
close to a dreamless sleep,
for sixty-four years is a long time
and I have no reason to remember.



Linoleum Print by Dena Blount

GLAZED

Cheryl Emery

I am yellow and blue,
floating like a Mardi Gras parade.
My eyes are glazed as
chocolate doughnuts
at 3:00 a.m.

I am tender
like a filet mignon,
soft as a leather glove.
I have bronzed skin
that stays warm
through wintertime.

Smooth lips
smiling,
cocaine in my nose,
my heart gallops
as I hold her
beneath the down comforter.

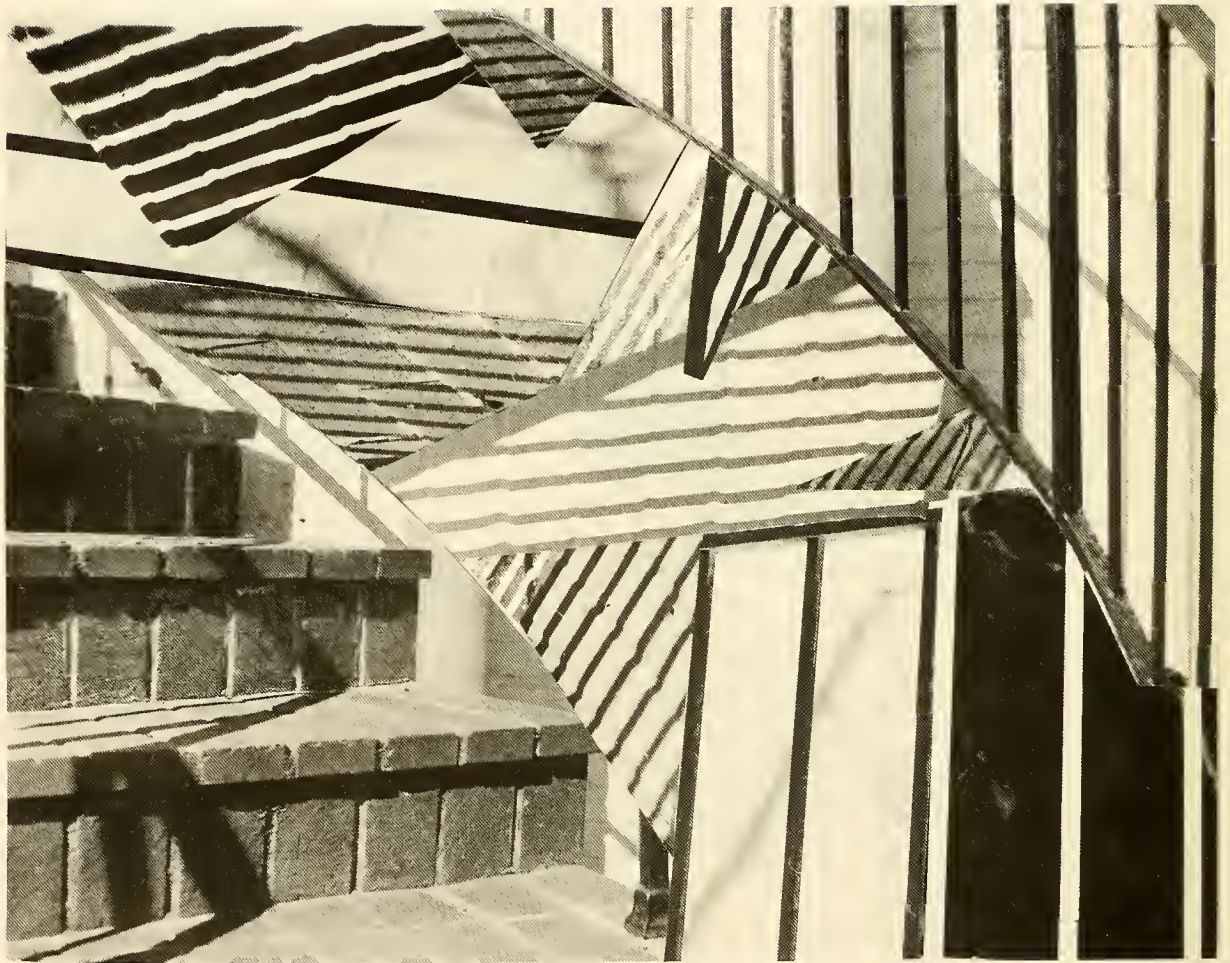
LONG NECK POINT IN SPRING

Cheryl Emery

The yellow glowing
stretches and yawns
behind scarlet cardinals
ornamenting ivory dogwoods
like Christmas trees.

Fuzzy silver squirrels
roll on fresh grass
that quivers with dew.
The ocean glitters rhinestones
on black velvet,
croons cool, salty ballads.

Tiger lilies
with black freckles
sway like ballerinas
and turn to flame
as the sun sets,
melting into hot orange
like tall candles.



*Photo Collage by Helen Spruill
Honorable Mention, Art
Muse Contest*

GRADUATION

by Meredith Taylor

It is 7:45 p.m. and Sebrina Yates is doing the finishing touches on her make-up. She sits on a petite, peach-cushioned stool that matches her peach and white bedroom. She stops putting on the second coat of her new fluorescent-green mascara and stares at herself long and hard. She thinks about what she did the other day at school and begins to feel a rush of heat inside her body, but quickly puts the thought out of her mind and glances at her blonde, teased hair, and her bright and extremely-noticeable eyeshadow. As always, she likes what she sees. She practices her smile in two or three different ways, trying to decide which smile she is going to flaunt at Chris Raymer's high school graduation party tonight. Sebrina knows everyone is going to be there.

She quickly stands up and frantically runs across her room to retrieve her "Perfectly Purple" fingernail polish. She has almost forgotten to paint her nails before the party, and Sebrina can never go anywhere without her nails painted. As she rumbles through her dresser drawer madly searching for the purple polish, she hears her mother's graceful footsteps briskly scuffing the carpet on their way towards Sebrina's room. Sebrina rolls her eyes and knows she is in for the "Be-careful-before-party" lecture. Her mother's footsteps get closer, and as her mom enters the doorway of Sebrina's room, Sebrina snatches up the purple polish. "I found it!" Sebrina screams. "For a minute there I didn't think I would."

"What are you looking for, dear?" Sebrina's mom calmly asks.

"Oh, just my purple fingernail polish. Why?"

"I was just trying to make conversation, honey. Please don't be so defensive."

Sebrina rolls her eyes in her usual manner and screws open the bottle of fingernail polish. She is just waiting for the lecture to begin. The fumes from the bottle of the polish fill the room and begin to give Sebrina a headache, but Sebrina takes one look at her plain nails and knows that she must paint them. She glances at the clock beside her bed and discovers that it is 8:26 p.m. "Ahh!" Sebrina whines. "I have to get a move on. I have to leave here by 9:00 p.m."

"When does the party start, dear?" Sebrina's mom curiously asks.

"Oh, it started around 8:00 p.m., but you know that I have to be fashionably late. Anyway, the party doesn't really start until I get there."

"Oh, it doesn't, huh?" Sebrina's mother replies in a very sassy tone.

Sebrina looks at her mother sharply, as if to say, "Get out," but Sebrina's mom just ignores her vicious look and continues to talk.

"Sebrina, honey, I just want you to know that I am extremely proud of you. I can hardly believe my little baby is graduating next week."

Sebrina stops messing with her nails and begins to stare at the floor. She runs her toes through the thick, soft carpet and begins to feel a surge of guilt rush through her. Sebrina's eyes begin to water, but she does not want to give her mother any clue that something could be wrong, so she takes a deep breath and begins to walk towards her dresser to put back her fingernail polish.

"Mom," Sebrina begins, "I have to tell you—" Sebrina pauses, but changes her mind. She could never tell her mother what she did. Anyway, she knows she will not get caught, so why risk getting in trouble?

"Tell me what, dear?" Sebrina's mom asks.

"Oh, uh, I just wanted to tell you that I love you. I mean, I don't say it very often."

"I love you too, dear, but you're right, you don't say it very often."

Sebrina flashes one of her fake party smiles and ushers her mom out of the room before she gets the chance to lecture. She then trots over to her closet and pulls out her leather mini-skirt that she has only worn one other time, and that was at her cousin's house which is in a different state, so no one in her town, New Bern, has seen it yet. Sebrina slips the tight, white leather skirt on and has to hold in her breath to get it zipped up. She takes a quick look at the clock and sees that she has ten minutes before she has to leave. She throws on a loose, white, summer sweater that is decorated with rhinestones and leather, and slides on a pair of white ankle boots with tassels dangling off of the sides. Sebrina admires herself in the mirror again and thinks about how she cannot wait to flirt with Craig Myers. She knows that with her looking as good as she does, she is going to be irresistible to every guy there, but only Craig Myers is going to be able to touch her. She figures it is her last chance to get close to Craig because he is going away to college in the fall. She knows that she is going to miss him terribly, but figures that she will meet someone at the beach this summer to take his place. Sebrina continues to stare at herself and realizes that she is going to finally be out of school. She smiles because she is so thrilled; she does not think that anything could ever make her happier.

She brushes her hands through her thick, blonde hair and pinches her cheeks nice and hard to get a rosy, healthy color in them, and casually struts out the door of her room. She snatches her tiny white purse off of her bedroom door and throws her hand up to flick the light switch off. As she struts down the hall, she puts a swing

in her hips just for practice and pulls her sweater up over her buttocks to make sure all the guys will be able to get a good view of her white mini-skirt. She chuckles to herself while thinking about how flirtatious she is, but knows she would not change places with anyone. Sebrina is going to graduate in a few days and she feels that is something to flaunt.

As Sebrina approaches the kitchen, her heels make loud tapping sounds on the wooden kitchen floor. She loves that sound so much that she taps her heels a few more times just for her own enjoyment. Sebrina walks towards the refrigerator to get the milk. She hopes the milk will coat her stomach. She knows that she will drink tonight at the party, and does not want to make a fool of herself by getting sick. She remembers the last party she went to; she got so sick that she did not even remember what happened and she spent the next two days with a terrible headache. Her friends at school still pick on her about it, but she does not let it bother her too much.

As Sebrina is pouring the milk, she sees the unopened mail stacked on the kitchen table. She closes the milk carton and sets it down next to the mail. Sebrina inquisitively flips through the mail but, as usual, there is only junk mail. Sebrina never can understand why people waste time mailing junk advertisements that just get thrown away. She feels it is such a waste of paper. She continues to flip through the mail and comes to a long, white business envelope that is addressed to her. She looks in the corner of the envelope to see what the return address is and notices it is from her school. Sebrina slowly places the rest of the mail back on the kitchen table and pulls out a chair to sit on. The butterflies begin to flutter in Sebrina's stomach as she stares at the unopened letter. She wonders what it could be about and quickly prays to God that she does not get caught for what she has done at school. She glances at the clock and sees that it is 9:01 p.m. She wants to throw the letter away without opening it, and go to the party, but she knows she has to open it. She sticks her finger under the unglued part of the envelope and begins to rip it open. As she tears it open, she begins convincing herself that it is probably just a letter of congratulations and nothing to worry about. Her finger finally rips open the last end of the envelope and there is a piece of white paper. By now Sebrina's hands begin to shake a little and she slowly pulls the paper out. She nervously undoes the folds of the paper and begins to

read softly to herself.

Dear Miss Yates,

We regret to inform you that, due to the fact that you cheated on your final English exam, you will not be allowed to graduate with your class. Your dishonest performance is extremely inexcusable and we hope that you will take time to think about what you have done.

In order to graduate, you will be required to report to summer school to receive your English credit and diploma.

With deepest regret,

Albert J. Jones

Albert J. Jones, Principal
New Bern Senior High School
New Bern Board of Education

Trembling furiously, Sebrina gets up from the chair and throws the milk carton across the room. She cries hysterically and begins to run down the hall towards her room. She knows what she has done is wrong, but why this? She has been waiting to graduate all year. As she runs down the hall, she almost passes her mom coming from her room. Sebrina stops and throws the letter at her. Her mom stares at Sebrina and tries to touch Sebrina's face with her hand, but Sebrina darts away from her mother and heads for her room. She runs into the doorway of her room and hits the light switch as hard as she can. After slamming the door, she throws herself on her bed and continues crying hysterically. She thinks about what she has done as she hears her mother cry out in the hall. Her mother's footsteps get louder and Sebrina cannot bear to face her as she slowly cracks open the door.

"Sebrina!" her mom whispers. "Look at me!"

Sebrina hesitates while she wipes her eyes. As she turns her head towards her mom, she catches a glance at herself in the mirror, and for the first time in her life, she does not like what she sees.

ARLINGTON LANE

by Mollie Gowens

This room is not the same and will never be the same again. When Ellie Anderson called and told me what had happened, I was in total and complete shock. Mother had always seemed happy, or at least moderately happy. It is really hard to understand why anybody could do such a horrible thing to herself. The thing that makes it really horrible is that it was my mother who did it to herself. I have spent every minute of every day since I received the phone call trying to figure out why she did it. Then I realized that there was no answer to that question.

When Ellie Anderson called, her voice did not have its usual perky tone. My mother and I had lived in the same house for twenty-five years and Ellie Anderson had lived in her house for thirty-one years. Ellie heard me mumble my first words and saw me stumble through my first steps. She saw me leave the house on my first car date, a date with John Williams. She saw me off to college with my mother and hugged me good-bye when I moved into my own apartment. But I have not seen Ellie much since I moved away. I am in Charlotte and that is not close to Boone.

When I picked up the telephone Tuesday morning, the last thing I wanted to hear was Ellie, with a shaky voice as if she had been crying, say, "Sara, it's your mother. I went to check on her because there has not been any activity at your house. I knocked on the door and rang the bell. Nobody came to the door. Your mother's car was in the driveway. Honey, it is hard to tell you this. There was a note beside your mother." That was all Ellie had to say. Actually, I could tell from her voice that something was wrong. When I hung up the phone, I do not think I have ever felt so empty inside. Suddenly, I began to cry and scream.

Once I had calmed myself down, I threw some clothes in a bag and went into the kitchen. I got a cup of coffee and lit one of my Virginia Slim Lights. Thoughts of my mother kept running through my head. I remembered the good times and the bad times. She was more than a mother; she was a lifetime friend.

The words that Ellie had said to me kept ringing in my head and they would not go away. It was almost like the time my mother so kindly explained to me that daddy would no longer be around. I was six then and I worshipped the ground my father walked on. After dinner one night, my mother took me into the den and I sat on her lap. She said to me as tears filled my eyes, "Sara, you know that Kerry's father no longer lives at home. Her daddy loves her very much even though he does not live at home. Sara, your daddy loves you very much and has decided not to live at home. You can visit him and he can visit you, but he will not live here." She gave me a big hug and everything seemed as if it would be just fine. Mama, I

want a hug right now so everything will be okay! Come on, Sara, are you insane? Mama's not here anymore. I got up, grabbed my pocketbook and my bag, put out my cigarette, ran out the door, and hopped into the car.

Driving down the highway, I went over and over Ellie's words in my mind. I felt like it was a dream. I could not figure it out. Why did she do it? She was always so happy and kind. How could God let people like this escape from the earth? As I was driving, I was trying to sort out all the anger I felt inside. Who was to blame for this? It was not fair. I needed this lady!

I reached for a cigarette to calm me down. I noticed this was my last cigarette, so I would need to stop soon to buy some more. I saw one of those "FOOD, TELEPHONE, AND GAS" signs and then another sign that said that the exit was one mile ahead. I took that exit and bought some cigarettes. I was suddenly reminded of the time my mother caught me smoking in the eleventh grade.

It was on a Friday night and my friends and I were going to go out. My mother had been out doing Christmas shopping. My friends and I were over by the mall. We ran out of cigarettes and stopped at a Texaco. As I was walking out with the cigarettes, my mother pulled up to get gas. She saw me, but acted as if she didn't. I thought everything was cool and she did not care. That night when I got home, I found out otherwise. I was telling her goodnight and she said that we needed to have a chat. Usually I cannot read my mother's mind, but since she had seen me smoking, I knew what we were going to chat about. She made me sit down. I could see the disappointment in her eyes as she began to speak. "Sara, you know that smoking is bad for your health and that I disapprove of it. Why would you want to do anything that would shorten your life? I love you and want you to be around." My mother wanted to know why I would do anything that would shorten my life! Look what she had just done; she had ended her life!

I had been driving for a while and I knew that I should almost be in Boone. I saw a sign and it said that Boone was fifteen miles away. The last time I was in Boone, my mother was alive. Tears filled my eyes and I felt as if I should pull over and let my emotions flow. Ellie's words were still going through my mind for the next fifteen miles. These words were getting louder and louder and louder.

When I finally got to Boone, I saw all the places my mother and I used to visit. There was the McDonald's where we often ate lunch on Saturdays, the drugstore I got my medicine at, the gift shop where I got the picture frame for my mother for Christmas the year I turned sixteen. We had gotten our picture taken together and I had

put the picture in the frame. I remember the Christmas morning she opened it. She had a smile from ear to ear and hugged me really tight. She told me, "We are going to put this on the table in the living room so everybody can see it. I can tell people this is my beautiful daughter and her old mother." I never thought of my mother as old. She always looked young. When she would go buy a bottle of wine, the cashier would ask for her I.D.

Then I saw it. A street sign that read "Arlington Lane." The street sign was still there, I thought to myself. There were a lot of memories on that street. That was all I had now—memories. I had turned down this street thousands of times, but on that Tuesday afternoon it took all my strength to make that left turn. I drove by the Hawkins house, the Bennett house, and finally I caught sight of the Young house as my eyes filled with tears again. My house is big and it is white. I suppose it is a Victorian-style house. As I got closer to the house, I spotted my mother's 1982 Oldsmobile. I remember when she got that car. She was so proud of it because it was the first new, new car she had ever bought.

I made the right turn into the driveway. My eyes were overflowing with tears. I could not bring myself to step out of the car. I must have sat in the car for thirty minutes, just staring at the house and smoking cigarettes. Then I came out of my trance to hear someone tapping on the car window. It was Ellie. I got out of the car. We just looked at each other and then Ellie hugged me.

Finally Ellie broke the silence, "Are you doing okay?"

"Yes, and you?"

"Fine. Do you want to get a cup of coffee?" asked Ellie.

"That would be nice. I would like to have it in my house, if that is okay."

"Are you sure about that?"

I smiled and said, "Yes, if I can find my keys."

I think Ellie thought I was crazy, going in the house where my mother took her own life. I had to do it some time, so why should I put it off? I fumbled for my keys and finally found them. I was scared to walk in the house, and could tell Ellie felt the same way. We did not look at each other; we just looked around the house. It looked so empty and old without Mama there. I could see the bloodstains on the living room floor. That was her favorite room in the house. She had the best time putting all the antique furniture in there. Mama always went to auctions to try to find unique items.

Ellie followed me into the kitchen. We had not spoken since we stepped in the empty house. I finally asked Ellie, "How did she do it?"

Ellie said, while staring at the floor, "She took a gun, placed it in her mouth, and pulled the trigger."

I suddenly felt very faint and went to sit down in my usual seat at the kitchen table. My mama would often invite Ellie to eat with us, and Ellie was sitting in her usual seat beside me. The seat that my mother always occupied was vacant.

I asked Ellie if she knew why my mother did it. She explained to me that my mother had been acting strange lately. She was full of life one minute and the next minute she was depressed. Ellie said she was a little worried, but she thought my mother was a strong lady and could make it through anything. I guess my mother had us fooled all those years.

While sitting in the living room surrounded by memories of my mother, I still tried to figure out why she did it. I came to the conclusion that I will never figure it out and will have to hold on to the memories and thousands of happy times. I just hope that my mother realized how deep my love for her was. Some day when we are together again, I will tell her my thoughts of the past hours, and the most important thing—how much I love her.









MUSE 1990





*Photo by Karen Dismukes
First Place, Art
Muse Contest*

The beauty of things was born
before
eyes and sufficient unto it-
self;
the heart-breaking beauty
will remain when there is no
heart to break for it.
—*Robinson Jeffers*

MUSE 1990

Saint Mary's College



by Gillian Troy

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TOM HAWKINS (POETRY)
CARRIE KNOWLES (PROSE)

MUSE CONTEST WINNERS

J. K. BIRD
MICHELLE CRESS
JENNY CROWDER
KAREN DISMUKES
MIMI HAYNES
KRISTY LAWSON
SARAH STEVENS

MUSE CONTEST HONORABLE MENTIONS

J. K. BIRD
SARAH CALANDRA
EMILY FERDON
WEBSTER GRIMES
KRISTY LAWSON
SARAH STEVENS

**Cover Art by Karen Dismukes*

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*Lino Reduction Print
by Ashley Griffin*

SLUGS

Jenny Crowder

There they are in their simplicity,
moving together, circling,
leaving glistening moons
on the whitewashed pavement.
Then at once, in the cool of the evening,
they spot the tree.

Climbing their arboreal bed
patiently, gratefully,
they make their way
to a sacred spot,
coming together, deliberately making a whole,

exuding love's warmth, to
hang treacherously by their own
unity. From out of the nothingness
that surrounds them, comes peace.

*First Place, Poetry
Muse Contest*

PURE IN MOTION

Michelle Cress

Early morning's first rays
burn silvery dew off moist clover.
A crack of the whip and they
turn on their heels,
earth reverberating under the force
of tons—their steel shoes and bell-capped
hooves pounding the earth,
churning up the delicate grass.
Then, waiting at the gate, they stand:
ears perched, nostrils flaring with their
gentle deep breathing.
A mass of sinewy hoof and hide. Bay and roan;
chestnut and dappled gray,
pure in motion, in dazzling dance
or in heart-stopping, last-second leap.

*Second Place, Poetry
Muse Contest*

AFTER "THE SEINE AT GIVERNY, MORNING MISTS"

By Claude Monet

Barbara Bryant

Hues of blue decorate the earth.
Lavender mist.
Grey shadows dancing on the Seine.
Whirlwinds of color blending in fog.
Clouds allowing light to filter through.
Shades of depression or hope?
Daydreams.
Tranquility
drifting along the river in waves.



*Lino Print by Sarah Stevens
Honorable Mention, Art
Muse Contest*

DEER

Emily Ferdon

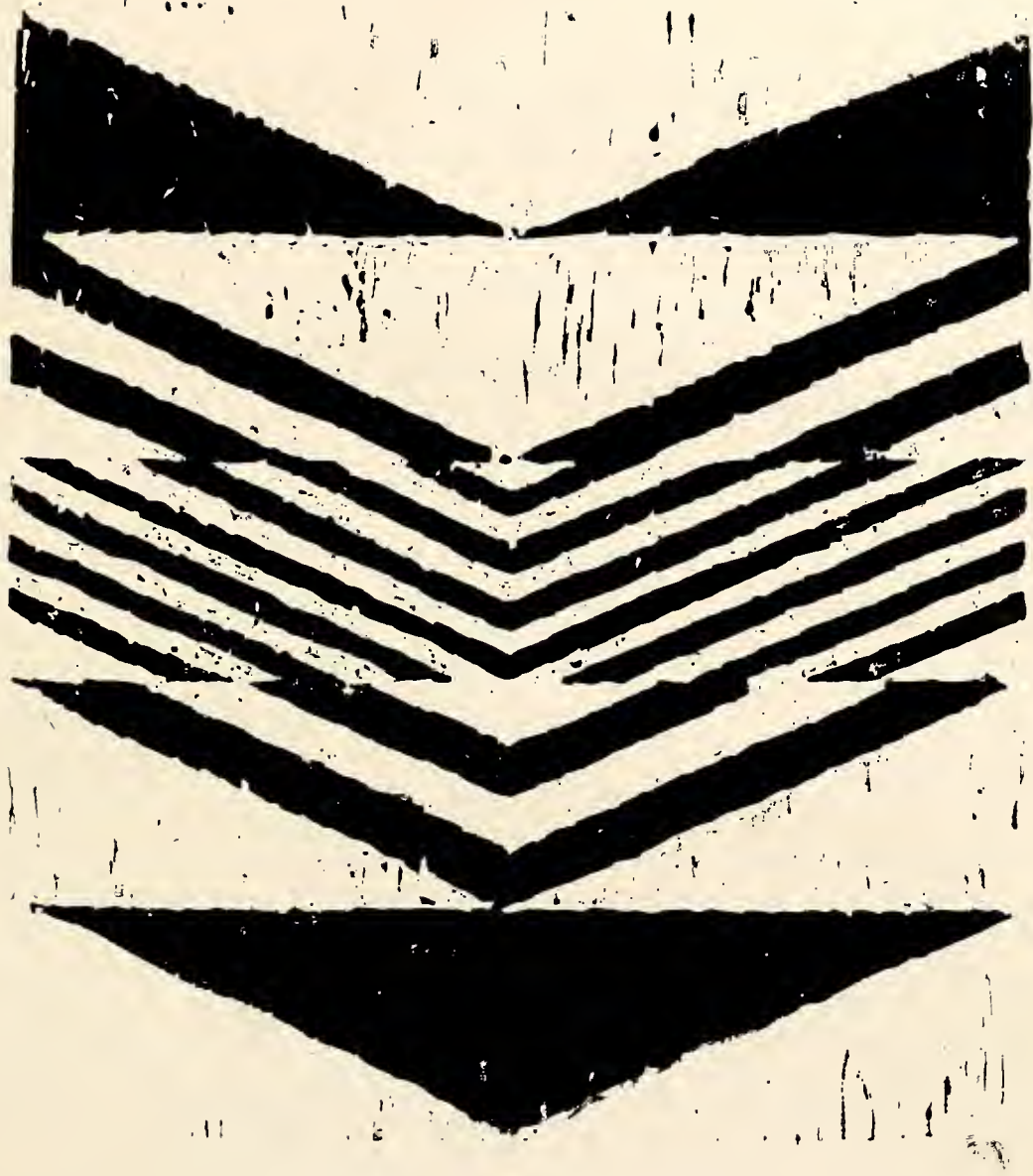
Trapped with their eyes
in the headlights,
they stare blindly,
waiting to be freed.

Standing there with all
the grace of beautiful ballerinas
about to leap
into a heart-fluttering dance.

They struggle, will
themselves to look away,
mindlessly chewing grass
to keep their courage up and fear down.

Finally, turning with
one jaunting, backward glance,
they leap into the last distance:
their white tails
illuminate the dark.

*Honorable Mention, Poetry
Muse Contest*



*Woodcut by Mimi Haynes
Third Place, Art
Muse Contest*

WHEN YOUR WORDS ARE WHISPERING

J. K. Bird

Now, when your words are whispering in my mind,
and night has wrapped its listless, fur-less tail
around my neck, so dreams of day might fail,
I touch my petal-wet pillow to find
thoughts of mocking memories unkind;
I see through eyes soft-draped behind this veil
of blue street light those images so frail
of you, I, and the blue sky—none left to find.

You say you saw a footprint in my eye.
I swear no one had walked that way before.
I bathed your feet in oil and in saline,
and bore your blood-laugh as my own extreme,
yet pray again to feel the shoe you wore
and bless the wind that carried me my cry.

*Third Place, Poetry
Muse Contest*

BUTTERFLIES

J. K. Bird

Still oceans of red
unconsciously consume my vision.
I feel my veins—cold iron chains
tie me, achingly, to your touch,
so powerful as to make God recreate
each blue, each red, each thought-worn
recollection,
the touch that tore away time's flesh
to reveal a bone-core of spiraling
butterflies.

THE STAINED GLASS WINDOW

Debbie DeBruhl

I can look out my dusty blinds
and view the window,
its insight and detail,
all the iridescence of a rainbow
forming a picture.

Here is a statement,
this man with his hands
reaching out far and wide,
trying to tell me something.

It is hard to make clear
this late at night,
with only the reflection
of the moon to see,
that this window says something
to me.

The view from the inside
must be more clear,
more structured, detailed,
serene and sincere.

It is beginning to rain,
the colors to smear;
the man's face is fading,
his hands turning away.

What was he trying to say?



*Photo Collage by Sarah Stevens
Second Place, Art
Muse Contest*

CRADLES

by J. K. Bird

The room filled with a wild, encompassing laughter. The walls which had been imprisoning me were painted with yellow happiness and, for the first time that day, I saw the bright sunshine that filled my window. I left my room, not even realizing that this ruined my plan to torture my family with my unhappiness.

"What's so funny?" I asked, bursting through the swinging wooden door. Anna's shining black eyes glanced over at me.

"A Muffin le gusta el chile!" Anna managed to say through her laughter.

"What?" I asked. That was a bit too much Spanish for me. But she was beyond answering. She stretched out an arm which had been crossed over her stomach, holding in her sides, and pointed to our miniature poodle who was greedily crouched over her food dish. Muffin was just a puppy then, and she continued to love spicy food all fourteen years of her life.

"The chile!" she burst out. Anna had fed the little dog extremely spicy-hot chile, and Muffin loved it! I watched Anna's warm, dark body roll with laughter. Her long, black hair tossed back and her large, expressive mouth formed the biggest smile I had ever seen. The warmth and freedom and joy in her laugh made me join in.

"Miguel," she called me. I would have quickly corrected anyone else; it was Michael, but it was all right for Anna. "You laugh now, but not in your room. *Cuál es el problema?*"

"It's just that my parents won't let me go to the market."

"The market? I take you someday, *conmigo*, just selling things."

"No, I saw it once, when we first got here. There were so many people, and they sold animals and tacos."

"And I can make tacos here, silly Miguel." She shrugged at my unexplainable interest and ruffled my short brown hair.

I told my parents that night at dinner about the hilarious incident with Muffin and the chile. They didn't see the humor in it.

My father said, without so much as a smile, "The Thornton's maid gave her toddler some very spicy food and thought the child's reaction was terribly funny, and I've heard that's quite common."

"I think that must be the way they accustom their children to hot foods," my mother added.

Anna lived up to her promise. About three months later, my parents were going to some meeting. Anna had to take care of me, and she convinced my parents that she needed to go to the market. Mother conceded to let her take me.

We took a taxi into Mexico City. My nose was glued to the window the whole way there. I saw many houses like mine, stucco with tall walls and wrought iron gates sur-

rounding them. As we drew closer to the city, there were shacks built of graying, weather-beaten wood and corrugated zinc roofing, leaning against the walls for support. On such walls, razor-sharp shards of broken bottles were cemented around the top.

Arrival at the market was more exciting than the zoo. Here I could pet the scraggly goats and shaggy sheep. And there was the wonderful, warm, spicy smell of tacos being cooked by the street vendors. It filled my nose and lungs and mouth, and even covered up the odor of the animals. My mouth watered and my stomach growled with temptation. My parents had always abhorred the street vendors. I can remember my mother saying, "You don't want one of those. See how dirty it is, and see, that man is making them with dirty fingers. You would catch diseases from it." Despite my mother's fervent warnings, the tacos still drew me. The combination of their enticing smell and the excitement of being at the market was too strong for me. A modern-looking shelter with a wooden roof, like a gigantic picnic shelter, housed the booths. An old man sat on a stool covered by woven rugs, selling tacos in the dust before the cement floor began. His eyes were so used to squinting in the sun that they had become thin, wrinkled slits. With Anna behind me, to give me courage, I held out my pesos. He took them and silently began preparing my taco. I looked down to see two fingers and a thumb rolling the tortilla. Where the pinkie and the ring finger should have been on his right hand were two scarred, gnarled knobs. He looked up to see my curious, almost frightened examination of his deformity. He broke into a friendly, toothless grin and went on to say something beyond my ability to understand. I asked Anna, and she explained that it was just an accident with an oil drill, years ago.

All that day at the market not only was I intimidated by so many people, but I had a feeling, deep in my stomach, that I would surely die of food poisoning, a tragic death for a boy at the tender age of six! By the end of the day, I felt no signs of death approaching, so I began to doubt the validity of my mother's warnings. Maybe that's why I got the rabbit. I had never had a pet of my own; my parents told me that cats and rabbits shed a lot. The fur would make you sick, and small animals carry diseases, and besides, I would not be able to take care of it. I didn't set out to disobey my parents that day; it all developed innocently.

Anna had been having as much fun as I, showing me off to all the booth owners. One of the very last booths we visited sold chickens and rabbits. I amused myself by playing with a little cinnamon-colored rabbit.

"Look, Anna, feel how soft it is."

"Si, Miguel, it is soft. You like the little rabbit, no?"

"It will taste good also," the chicken man said. Then he laughed at my horrified expression. "Gringos eat no rabbits."

"Miguel, would you like to have that rabbit?" Anna asked.

"What should I name him?" I asked, eagerly holding him up in front of me, hoping a better view might produce a name. His translucent pink ears drooped on either side of his triangular face. Glistening round eyes stared at me blankly, refusing to yield a name.

"Name him?" Then came Anna's laughter, and the chicken man joined in.

"What's so funny?"

"You don't name rabbits," she explained.

"But why not?"

"No puedes. You just can't."

Well, I got my way, and Anna got hers. I named him Conejito which means "little rabbit." My parents were not impressed with Conejito; he was banished to a hutch in the backyard beside the swimming pool building. My mother said something about not keeping wild animals in cages, and my father gave me a serious talk about responsibility.

"Now you think of that rabbit as something fun, a cute little animal you can pet and play with," he began. I could tell this was a serious matter because he had taken me into the study. That was something that rarely happened, and only for matters of the utmost gravity. "It is that, but it is also something totally dependent on you." He went on to explain the responsibilities of pet ownership.

Every day, Anna would give me a few carrot tops and lettuce stems to take out to him as a treat. Anna and I often played with him, and Anna became my all-round best friend. She played with me when I was bored, talked to me, even cleaned my room for me, which was, of course, part of her job, but that never really occurred to me. She became my hero, my supermom, and my buddy. She never had any problems talking to me in her thick-tongued "Spanglish." It was my parents who had trouble understanding her English, so my father always spoke to her in Spanish. He had to know Spanish to talk to the oil workers and government officials, whom he had to deal with as part of his job.

I remember one incident in particular, when my inability to understand my father's and Anna's conversations really bothered me. My parents and Anna went to talk in the study. This had never happened, so I was curious enough to listen at the door. I couldn't understand what my father said, and all I could hear my mother say was, "You should have known we wouldn't have minded having him here."

We lived in a very nice house; in fact, it had an indoor swimming pool. The pool was in a separate building off to the side of the house, and I often took Conejito there. I let him wander among the tropical ferns, rubber trees, orchids, and other leafy tropical plants I couldn't identify. They were planted in large planters set in the bottom of huge, arched brick windows that let in plenty of sun. Set in the center, between two arches, were huge bird cages filled with a rainbow of tropical birds, budgies, parrots, cockatoos, and finches that constantly whistled their own distinctive songs. The whole effect made me feel as though I were swimming in a jungle river, wrestling alligators, and fighting savage cannibals. It seemed to be a separate reality, another world, apart from unsmiling grown-ups. It was a world for me, and for Anna, of laughter, innocence, and dreams. Any trace

of seriousness or misery was extinguished there, as if it were a match dropped into the pool. Attached to one wall, between two of the windows, was a rail-less stucco staircase. I was not to go up there; it led to Anna's room which was private, hers.

Weeks passed which had the air of Christmas, or of a secret to which everyone was privy, everyone except me. Actually, it was Easter which approached. I had been floating on my back, looking up through the skylight, just watching the clouds drift by, listening to every ripple I made in the water echo throughout the room, while Conejito browsed among the tropical plants. My attention kept wandering to the door in the wall at the top of the stairs. It looked to me like it went through the wall of the building, to a drop-off. It really opened into a room atop the garage, which was attached to that wall of the pool building. Finally, I gave in. It wasn't so much curiosity as my newfound ability to disregard my parents' warnings, which I had discovered with the taco.

The climb up those narrow stairs seemed to stretch on for an eternity. There was no rail to stop me from falling, and at any moment, I might be found. I opened the heavy wooden door to find a very small room. It was nearly filled by a large bed, and jammed between the bed and the far wall was a typical Mexican cradle, white-painted wood with gaudily-drawn flowers in burning reds, oranges, and yellows. In it, a baby cried, face contorted and red. Anna had come to us five months before, and I had never before seen it. I tiptoed to the cradle and leaned over the wailing baby. The child's creased hands were clenched into fists that heaved up and down with every cry. My brain felt stiff, unable to function, my ears the same; I just stood, looking around the unlit room. I don't know how long it was before my ears awoke; when your mind doesn't move, neither does time. When I did begin to hear, it wasn't a baby's cry I heard; it sounded more like the scream of an adult, a terror I could not stand. I moved desperately to the heavy door, the room's only opening.

The shock of my discovery did not have time to settle in. Through the open door, I saw the arched glass doors below open and shut. I started to leave, but realized I would be seen.

"My purple orchid! That boy let his filthy rabbit loose in here, and it's eaten half of my orchid!" I heard my mother shouting. "We'll have to get rid of it if he's not responsible enough to take care of it!" I cringed at the threat.

"Is that Anna's baby crying?" I heard my father saying. "Her door is open." I knew I would be discovered, so I stepped out the door, and shut it quickly behind me. The crying was muffled from my ears. My parents immediately went through every reason why they should get rid of the rabbit, listing all my misbehavior from the day we arrived in Mexico up to the orchid incident. I apologized, and was allowed to keep the "filthy beast." I reminded my parents of the baby's crying. I was relieved that in my mother's anguish over the flower, they did not realize I had been in Anna's room.

The initial feeling I had on seeing that baby crying alone was one of shock and guilt. I had never had that feeling before, and it soon changed to anger. It is odd that I

blamed my parents for the neglect, and even myself, but never Anna. I found it impossible to associate that room with Anna. Anna had been to me someone infallible, faultless, who carried with her an air of laughter and dreams. But after I found the baby, I could never spend as much time with Anna. I still loved her, but I felt as though her time no longer belonged to me, and even if it did, she could never be the same person. Conejito managed to fill my time. I found that I could lie in the grass on the lawn and dream into the clouds while he grazed around me, just as I had in the pool. Lying in the grass didn't have the dreamlike quality the pool had had, but then, the pool room had also lost that quality.

We left after living in Mexico a year, on a huge ocean liner. It had a swimming pool, but I refused to swim in it. Despite many adult assurances, I was sure it went through the ship to the bottom of the ocean.

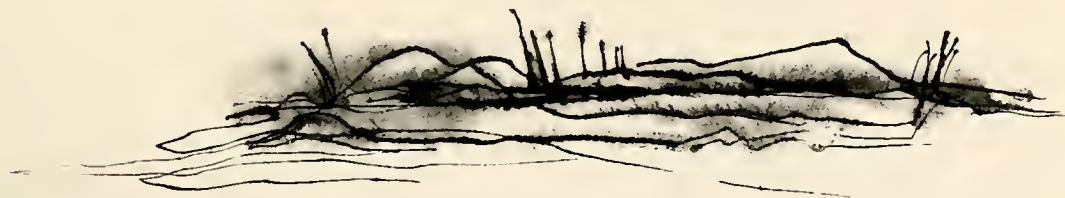
The most comparable feeling to the one I felt when I found Anna's room was the feeling I had when I found Conejito dead in his hutch years later. I was thirteen then.

We had been back in the States for six years and pet rabbits were for girls. He was no longer fun to play with, so I left him in the hutch all day. Every day I went through the ritual of feeding him, but when I found him, every word of my father's lecture from the day I brought him home went through my mind. I knew in the pit of my stomach that his death was my fault, even though I had always fed him.

After Conejito died, I asked my father about Anna, but he didn't know where she was. I told him of finding the baby, and asked its name.

"I don't remember. She did have a little baby son. At first her sister took care of him, in Mexico City, but we felt she should bring it to the house. She also had a five-year-old in a Catholic school, and a husband somewhere. I guess she was only twenty-two," he said, not even looking up from his paper. The corners of his mouth turned down as he kept reading. Then he looked up at me as though realizing my presence for the first time. "I'm sorry, son, what were we talking about?"

J. K. Bird
First Place, Prose
Muse Contest



Ink Wash by Gillian Troy



*Acrylic Drawing
by Julie Hamilton*

PHIL

Jenny Crowder

There's a photo of you hanging
lonely on my wall.
It's in black and white and
shades of grey.
I'm catapulted back to
that innocent afternoon.
We sat in the sun, our feet propped up
and warmth on our faces.
You were wearing flannel and denim;
the breeze was cool.
Your ebony curls hung at the nape
of your olive-skinned neck.
They were as silky as a fine kimono
I might have wrapped
loosely around my naked body.
In the darkroom, you spent hours
on the black and white,
ignoring the shades of grey.
"Contrast is the key," you said.
Today I know there is no black or white;
there are only shades of grey.

YOU WERE WEARING (After Kenneth Koch's Poem)

Mary Tyler Fore

You were wearing your Alexander Julian printed cotton blouse.
In each divided up square of the blouse was a picture of
Alexander Julian.
Your hair was black and you were incredible. You asked me, "Do
you think you would marry for money instead of love?"
I smelled the wealth of your beachfront condo on your hair held
in place by Paul Mitchell Styling Gel.
"No," I said, "but I suppose some girls might." Then we read
Fortune 500 together
and ran around in the penthouse, so that a little of the
polished fine leather was scuffed on my Saks Fifth Avenue,
look-but-don't-touch shoes.
Mumsy was strutting into the room, her Liz Claiborne comb in her
hair.
We chatted for a while then joined her, only to be served
Perrier with a twist in cups painted with pictures of
Robin Leech,
as well as with illustrations from his T.V. show, "Lifestyles
Of The Rich And Famous."
Father came in wearing his Gucci necktie: "How about a ride in
the yacht, everyone?"
I said, "Let's go outside for a while." Then we went into the
gazebo and sat on the Rolex swing.
You sat on the diamond-studded face part and I sat on the gilded
band.
In the yard across the street we saw an ice sculpture carved
into the likeness of the mad American tycoon, Donald Trump.



*Felt Tip Drawing by Sarah Calandra
Honorable Mention, Art
Muse Contest*

MOON RUN

by Kristy Lawson

The moon was so big it must have taken up half the sky. It was a blinding yellow-white with iridescent light surrounding the dark and threatening night sky. As they drove down one narrow country road after another, it was all Sarah could do to take her eyes off the moon and look at the road ahead. She had always felt a special bonding between herself and the moon, like it was a great protector of the night, a mysterious ice-god that should be respected and admired. They turned on a sharp curve and she watched the moon drift to the other side of the sky. Sarah knew that if she could get out right there and climb a tree she could reach up and embrace it.

A feeling of nostalgia came over her as she thought back to her early childhood, and her dreams of flying to the moon and leaping on top of it. She would jump high and do a triple flip in the air and land on her feet, only to start leaping again. It wouldn't be at all like the old moonwalk at Ponchatrain Beach that smelled so bad from all the sweaty people. Sarah would go sailing through the air without an ounce of effort and never once fall back down to earth.

Ann and Megan were giggling about something in the front seat and Sarah was wearily drawn out of her trance. Lately she was so content leaning back and getting lost in her thoughts. Ann and Megan found this amusing and told her she was becoming "a burnout" at age seventeen.

"What are you thinking about, Sarah?" Ann asked, with a slight trace of her Portuguese accenting the words. "Jimmy Voss?"

The three girls burst into a fit of laughter, thinking about what they had done to Jimmy Voss's car the night before. When Jimmy had casually dumped Sarah after three months, she was devastated. He had broken up with her for April Scutter, more commonly known as April Slut-ter. She had only been living in New Orleans for one month and had already slept with half the boys in their high school. April had moved to Louisiana from Connecticut. She had mousy hair that came to her shoulders and frizzed at the ends. She was so skinny that she looked as if her elbows could harpoon a whale. Megan said that she was probably that skinny from all the sex. Sarah did not care about Jimmy anymore. She figured she was lucky that April had come along, or she might have ended up married to Jimmy and living in some dirty apartment complex with a daughter she didn't care about. She wasn't going to end up like her parents.

"I just wish we could have been there to see his face when he laid eyes on that car!" Sarah laughed. "He deserved it all, right down to the potato."

Since it was their last night in town Sarah, Ann, and Megan had gone to a party and gotten drunk. They had then gone to Jimmy's house late at night to get revenge. They had rubbed Vaseline on all his car windows, poured sugar

in his gas tank, and stuck a potato in his exhaust pipe. For the final touch, Megan had put a piece of fish in his radiator. She had seen it done in a movie, and had taken some fish from her parents the previous night and hidden it in a bush by her front gate until the time came to go to Jimmy's.

Ann and Megan were now singing loudly along with a song on the radio and drinking beer. The speakers in Ann's car were almost blown and the radio sounded like an old record that had been through a washing machine. They didn't seem to mind and Sarah didn't either. She looked around Ann's car for a cigarette and finally found one. She cracked the window and threw out the match. Ann had been driving the car for a year and a half, ever since she had gotten her license and her brother had left to go back to Brazil. He didn't bother to sell his car because nobody would have bought it, that was for sure. It was an old Datsun 260zx that used to be white but now only had white paint specks here and there. The grey vinyl upholstery was ripped on the seats so the yellow foam was showing through. It had numerous gaps in it where people had picked at it and was stained brown in some spots from drinks that had spilled on different occasions. The emergency brake was split and had an old rusty kitchen knife stuck in it so it wouldn't come loose. The door of the glove compartment was missing, but it had been like that when Ann's brother bought the car.

Sarah was scrunched in the back of the car in the little space provided by a two-seater. Her old gym bag, along with Megan's and Ann's bags, sat beside her. It was a tight squeeze, to say the least. They had an agreement to switch seats after every rest stop.

"Comfortable back there?" Megan asked. "You are always dreaming lately, Sarah. Aren't you glad to get out of that place? Finally we're free! We are on our own! This is great. We can see the whole world; it's ours to conquer."

Megan rolled down her window and stuck her head out. She was laughing and screaming, "The world is ours!"

Sarah climbed up into the front seat with Megan and joined in on the screaming. Ann opened a beer and stepped on the brake, so Megan and Ann got jolted. All three girls began another giggling fit.

Ann screamed, "Oh my God, there's a damned opossum in the road."

She swerved the car just as the opossum reached the dark grass lining the roadside. All the girls sighed in relief and Sarah climbed into the back. Megan and Ann continued chatting in excited voices, making plans for their new life. Sarah was still shaken up about almost hitting the opossum and stared back up at the moon. She imagined that the moon had been watching over that opossum and silently thanked it.

Sarah unsnapped Megan's suitcase and got out a new pack of cigarettes. She needed one to calm her nerves. She

touched the blouse that was lying on top of Megan's suitcase. It was a white silk shirt from a famous department store. Megan had such nice clothes that Sarah was sometimes a little jealous. Megan did not live in Ann's and Sarah's red-brick apartment complex behind the A&P. She lived in an old white plantation house. Her father had renovated the old slave quarters and made them into a room for Megan. It was actually like a miniature doll house. White lacy material covered the windows and the queen-sized brass bed. But Megan barely ever touched her bed or any other part of her room for that matter. She didn't like it. She was the black sheep of the family; that's why she had a separate room. She was dating at twelve, drinking at thirteen, and out of control by age fourteen. Her parents threatened to disown her, but were not really concerned with what she did. All they asked was for Megan not to do anything else to publicly humiliate them. Last month she had stolen her father's BMW and in a drunken stupor had run it into a group of chairs and tables that belonged to an outdoor cafe in the French Quarter. Lucky for her, it was raining, and there were no customers.

All the tables and chairs were demolished and Megan had had to pay for the damages. That wasn't the problem, though. The problem was the social page of *The New Orleans Gazette*. Everyone knew. Megan did not care about the gossip problem but her parents did. Megan hated New Orleans. She hated the high humidity, the mosquitoes, the dirt, and the grime. She hated the queer men who walked around the French Quarter in women's clothing and the hordes of obnoxious tourists who came every year to celebrate Mardi Gras, talking like April Scutter and yelling at their kids.

It was Megan's idea to leave. The girls had been saving their money for a long time and had quite a bit. Sarah had worked all last summer and throughout the school year. Ann had worked with her and neither of them had told their parents lest they ask for the money. Ann's mother was a fat woman with olive skin and fake auburn hair. They had left Brazil four years ago and had moved into the New Orleans apartments Sarah lived in. Ann's mother only spoke Portuguese, and everyone in the complex could hear her when she yelled at Ann in her foreign tongue.

"Okay, girls, here's the plan." Sarah's thoughts were interrupted as Ann got out the beat-up road map from under the seat and handed it to Sarah. "We keep heading straight on this road and we should hit Houston in a few hours. We can hang out there for a couple of days, then head to the Grand Canyon on Tuesday. We are in for the times of our lives."

"I can't believe we're almost in Houston," Sarah said as she let out an exuberant squeal. "When we get there we will be living in style!" She hoped their money would last.

"Hell, yes, we are going to stay in the nicest hotel in town. Room service, porters dressed in uniforms just waiting to take our bags, and big parties every night," Ann said in a slightly authoritative voice. She had it all planned out and Sarah loved to listen to her talk about it. Ever since they had first met, she had loved to hear Ann talk. "I told my mom this morning that I was leaving and not coming back. I figured she might be curious about where I'm going. She thought I was lying at first, but when she saw my bag she believed me and I . . ." Ann was stepping harder and harder on the gas pedal of the 260 and her words were drowned out by the engine as the car filled with tension.

Sarah pushed her bangs out of her eyes as she always did when she was nervous.

"Sorry," Ann said as she eased off the gas and lit up a cigarette.

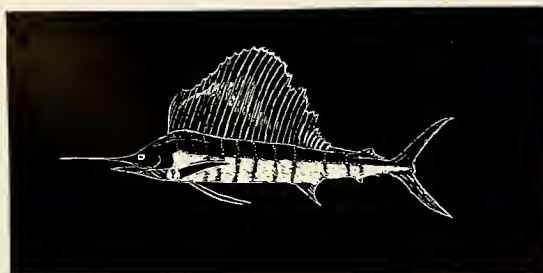
Megan piped up. "When I told my father what I was doing, he told me to be careful and gave me some money. He told me to write. Ha! He and Mama are going to tell their friends I went off to boarding school. That's a joke. Can you imagine me at boarding school?"

Ann and Sarah could not.

"Anyway, my father says he bets we'll be back soon enough. It's a cold world out there, darling. It's no place for a young girl. Why don't you wait until you're older and know more about the ways of the world? I swear that man thinks I'm so naive."

Sarah had drifted back into her own world. She thought about her grandmother. Grandma would not have let her go. She doubted her parents would care, so she hadn't told them. By the time her senior year started, she'd be on the other side of the world anyway.

*Kristy Lawson
Third Place, Prose
Muse Contest*



Scratchboard by Anna Underwood



Photo by Karen Dismukes

INDIGO

Jenny Crowder

Joni Mitchell sings "I'm blue . . ."
A blind black man plays a lone piano
and moans.
Funk.
Levi's after 3 washings.
Oppression.
Soul-mates. The patch on the back of Phil's
pants.
Why is he still so important?
The sky at 8 p.m. in the fall w/ the stars set in it
(embedded)
like diamond chips,
or even a celestial sheet w/ pinholes
letting light through. Yes.
Svelte summer bodies slice cleanly
through indigo, deep and pure.

MONET

Ellen Zimmerman

Crumbling buildings
Blend into the pastel sky
Modern shadows of people
Dancing busily among buildings
Cars rushing through narrow streets
Which wind forever through distant rooftops
Making them one
Darkness comes
The window lights recede into the stars
Reaching for the heavens
A city of lights



"Lady" by Brooke Jaeger

BOTTLED LAUGHTER

by J. K. Bird

The house was always filled with laughter or tears, but she never grew accustomed to it. When she turned off her radio to lie down to sleep, from the stillness of her bed she could hear it. She lay tense, immobile, until she could identify which one it was, for they both faded into the same tired grayness, or was it red? But when she knew which it was, she relaxed. Sobbing could send her into unconsciousness as easily as laughter, and she never had nightmares. She doubted that she dreamt at all, but then, of course, everyone does.

She and Sara passed a wrecked car. She laughed, and pointed. The driver's door was pushed in so far that it bent the car in two. Sara looked at her quizzically. "I don't get it; that's not funny at all."

She tried to feel the laughter, but it was formless. "Well," said the grayness, "I don't know when to laugh or when to cry."

James had cool green eyes, and clung to her. He smoked a lot, and his grating laughter cajoled her to try to make him stop. But she picked up the habit instead. He talked to her a lot. They would go to a hill next to the train tracks, near a subdivision with nothing but shapeless houses, baby trees, and tricycles on the light green lawns. They always went at night, when the windows glowed citrus yellow.

"Baby," he said.

"Yeah," she colorlessly mouthed.

"I love the way I can talk to you, like I can't with anyone else. Do you know what I'm trying to say?" She shivered, though the Indian summer's heat drowned her, and watched the glowing tip of his cigarette.

"I think you understand me, baby, I think you do."

He told her stories on the hill, about the people in the houses. He told her about the mother staying up to sew a Halloween costume, in one of those windows. And about the six-year-old, soon-to-be football player who had let the new puppy sleep on the foot of his bed, where he wasn't allowed. And when a plane passed over, he told her about the man flying home from Lubbock after a divorce. And the glow from their cigarettes looked like the lights in the subdivision to her.

"They look like oranges, and I can reach out and pick one," he said "And some day that'll be you and me. And

the only fights we'll have will be about bills and dishes, not hatred." He whispered the last red-gray words. And his arms twisted her around, to face him.

"Our kids will never shiver in their rooms curled around bottles of pills," he said.

("Brown cold glass," she thought.)

"Like unborn babies."

("Oxygenless blue," she thought.)

"And they won't have to puke up their happiness, when it turns sour in their stomachs, or slip it under their tongues."

("Thin, like blue ice," she thought.)

"To bring some color to life," he said.

Those twisting arms pulled her close, but the earth began to tremble, and she melted against the ground in the gray night's heat. She absorbed each tremor until the train passed. James' mouth and eyes closed cold with the pain from her withdrawal. He had always accused her of coldness, but to this he couldn't even speak. There was power in the trains.

One took her to Texas, to stay with Sara. The land was flat and colorless, and the train whistle echoed for miles, especially on rainy days. Sara had a baby who never cried. But she laughed gloriously. She threw her head back until all you could see was the gaping mouth. A few tiny white pearls glistened against the gums. Sara began to shut the windows at night. Even there winter came. The closed panes kept out her precious trains.

It was a smoky dusk, as she stood on his doorstep. There was no light in his window.

And his roommate said, "He's not here now, but you can wait."

"I need to go."

"He should be back soon; he'll want to see you."

She lay on the couch and watched her cigarette smoke rise through the half-darkness, twisting, pulsing, and he wasn't back. She scribbled a few words, and folded the paper, deliberately. With nerves insensate, she heard the whisper of a train whistle tickle the night. She lay tense, immobile, until it had passed. The smoke slowly disintegrated into the gray air, like a drop of blood, drowned in rain. She left with just the carefully-folded paper.

J. K. Bird
Honorable Mention, Prose
Muse Contest



"A Night For Two" by Letitia Jacobs

MAGIC

Emily Ferdon

We could only visit Grandma
every year or so,
flying to Louisiana,
enough candy to keep us quiet,
news to tell, news to hear,
searching for a familiar face
in a crowd of blank stares,
tears in her old eyes,
puzzlement in our young ones,
the big white house aging
faster than the hearts inside.
Racing to claim our favorite room,
Mickey Mouse smiling
at our long-awaited return,
daily trips to the grocery,
battles to see who could act older,
the old trying to act young.
Ball gowns, makeup, jewelry;
high-heeled shoes wobbling
under the frail feet of resurrection.
Fruitless efforts to erase the lines,
magic shows, black arts,
disappearing acts,
dresses, makeup, jewelry, all gone,
now only memories
living in a box.

EVERYTHING GETS BROKEN

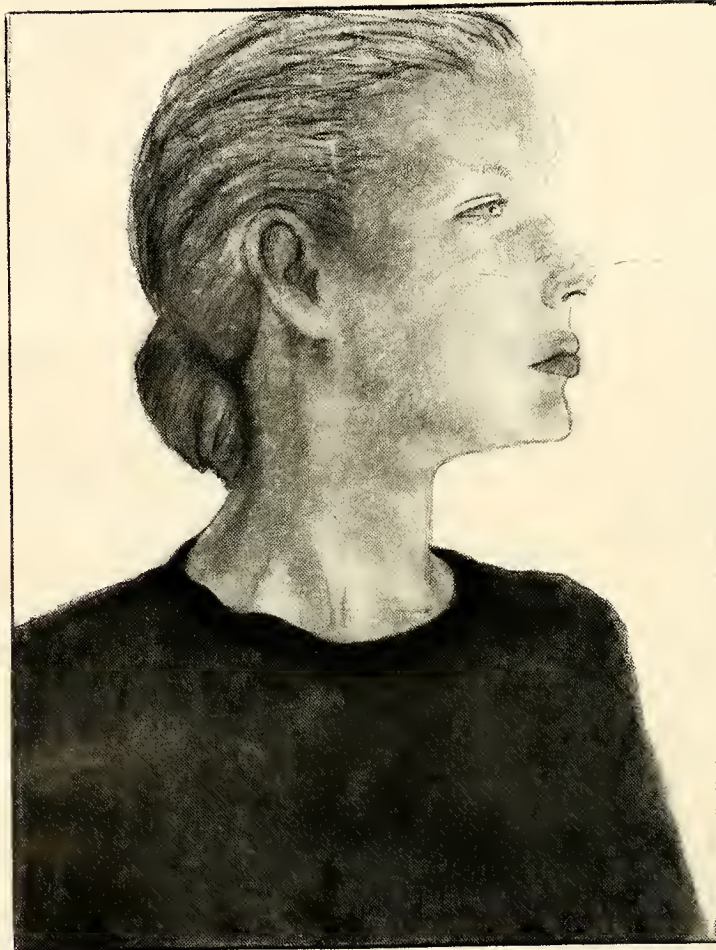
April Browne

Everything gets broken
A glass
A record
A soul
Even a heart
But most of the time
A glass
Delicate like a heart
So fine, smooth,
Original,
Like a painted picture
The lines
The reflection
The reality
As though you can
Reach out and touch it
Everything gets broken

NO RECOLLECTIONS

Britta Hesla

Easter. . .
pink sashes, egg hunts, bunny rabbits,
candy baskets;
no recollection.
Thanksgiving. . .
family reunions, turkey, acknowledged
blessings;
no recollection.
Christmas. . .
lit trees, carols sung in harmony,
presents wrapped with love;
I cannot recall.
Childhood. . .
intoxicating smell of gin,
daily dread of that 911 call,
anger, hatred, neglected love.
Bottles, bangs, bruises. . .
I recall.



Charcoal Drawing by Shelley Harris

JEREMY

by Jenny Crowder

It was getting late and I was still not ready to go. It was already five o'clock, and I had not even dried my hair yet. I had to drive all the way to Garner to pick up Jeremy by five-thirty. We were supposed to meet Dad at the oyster bar at six. Of course, he would probably be late, although his tardiness was always excused. God, I was grumpy, and I did not want to be grumpy for that visit. I had not seen Jeremy since his birthday in September, and that was months ago. I did not have any money, so Dad let me carry him gifts that Dad had bought. When I drove into the yard, Jeremy came flying out of his mother's double-wide trailer to open my car door for me, as he always did. He actually blushed when I gave him the big coat box containing a new pair of jeans and a denim jacket. The whole time he told me how I shouldn't have, while I told him how it was my pleasure. After fifteen minutes I was ready to go, but stayed to play video games on the television set and make small talk, until I could not stand it anymore and made an excuse to leave.

Now, as I drove down this deserted country road, the trees looked the same as they did almost a year ago when Dad and I came out here for the first time. It was last Christmas when I first met my half-brother. And it had been a year and a half since Dad first met his son, but he still hadn't told anyone that he even had a son. Dad was the youngest of nine siblings. All were married with children and Dad was the only one who had divorced. They were all raised on a piece of land the size of a city-block in what is now downtown Raleigh, North Carolina. My grandmother was proud of her children, who visited regularly, making her a center of gravity around which they all revolved. "Family has to always come first," my father used to say. His divorce was scandalous and "against God" as far as my grandmother was concerned. Her Christian beliefs were as deeply embedded as her love for her children. Since she had been housebound for the last ten years, she had had to watch her "church services" on the television set Uncle Benny gave her, sending in a good part of her social security check as donations every month. That is, until all the fuss came up about those Bakkers swindling money. She was heartbroken. "You know," she said to me, "the good Lord knows who is righteous." She patted me on the knee with her skeleton arms, her leftover skin dangling from her forearms. Her back was hunched over like she was carrying a pillow there, and since she had broken her hip ten years ago, her bones had done nothing but disintegrate to dust, forcing her to use a walker to get around with. She didn't miss anything that was going on in my family, though. If I wanted to know anything at all about the family, I just asked Grandma.

I imagined she was a lot of the reason for my father's ambivalence concerning telling the world about his son. He took me out to eat, before dinner ordering a drink, not

unusual at the end of the day. He didn't waste a lot of time getting to the point; he didn't have the time to waste. "I've got something important to talk to you about," he said. Then he told me how, during his legal separation from my mother, he had had a brief relationship with a woman in his office, partly because he was angry at my mother's absence. When the woman became pregnant, she wanted my father to marry her, but he refused and denied responsibility for the child. Twelve years later, a boy was in our lives, fatherless. His name was Jeremy. For a long time he never met his father, and during that time he and his mom moved away, she marrying a man who later became abusive to her and Jeremy. With no money, she left him, took a third-shift job at the post office, and moved into a trailer home on a dirt road near Garner. So there my father and I were in Darryl's, crying over our salads at the enormity of Jeremy's undeniable reality.

The first time we came out here, I was shaking inside, numb with fear. I cannot even remember where we went; I just know I sat in the backseat, thawing like some emotional glacier. Jeremy called my father "sir" and me "ma'am." "What should I call you?" he asked my father pointblank. "Call me Dad, if that's what you're comfortable with," Dad suggested, adding "I'm comfortable with Dad." I am sure the formality of "sir" did not seem appropriate for a boy to call his father, but "Dad" did not seem appropriate for a boy to call a stranger, either.

I visited Jeremy by myself a few weeks later, taking fudge I had made. He had made *my* gift months ago, a breathtaking collage of mythological characters from every fairy tale imaginable. He said that he had started over four months ago, just hoping we would get to meet before Christmas. He showed me how his Mom's room was decorated with pictures of me as a small child on my weekends with Dad. Some were of Dad and me, some were of her and me, and some were of the three of us, with her looking desperately motherly. Now she sat in her prefabricated living room, telling me how my favorite drink used to be milk, how my father's pet name for me was "Punkin," and how our favorite way to spend time together was at the park. She seemed to know all about my childhood until I was four-years-old. I did have one distinct memory of her, but only one. I had not known that she was leaving my father, and I had asked my Dad if I could call her Mom, since I had thought that she and my Dad would be getting married soon. I remember the distressed faces that were looking down at my seemingly innocent question, which they could not fully confront.

Shortly after Christmas, I asked Jeremy to join my friends and me for a New Year's celebration. "Yes!" he exclaimed. "I'd love to! Mom, can I?" I picked him up and we met my friends at Dave's house. I brought my fairy-tale collage and we set it up for everyone to see. "God, that's so

embarrassing," he would say whenever I told someone he made it for me himself.

Dave and Jeremy had an instant rapport. Dave had the ability to make anyone or any situation comfortable, and he certainly had his work cut out for him that weekend. Jeremy seemed completely comfortable, but I was a basket case. We ran out of soda and Robin and I went to the store to get some more. The whole time we were gone I kept saying to her, "Do you think he'll be okay? Do you think anything will happen to him?" She just smiled at me calmly and said, "No, I think he'll be all right." Of course, nothing happened to him in the fifteen minutes we were gone. We returned to find him playing video games with Dave's younger sister, also thirteen. I just looked at Robin and shook my head. She laughed, patted me on the back, and reminded me, "You've never had a brother to worry about before."

Later that night we all sat around a fire telling stories. Jeremy told us about how he almost got shot in the eye while his little brother was playing around with a BB gun. He said he had a small hole on the side of the bridge of his nose and every time he blew air out, he could feel it on his eye. He said it felt like he was breathing out of his eye. Looking at him with the firelight on his warm cheeks, I couldn't help but feel a sense of awe. There he was, in a circle of strangers, one of them his half-sister. While his Mom worked third shift at the post office, he babysat his little brother. He made straight A's in school and seemed to be perfectly comfortable getting to know his father and grown half-sister. I wasn't sure if he was for real. I expected to be able to reach out and wave my hand through the space where he sat. I wondered silently when and if the floodgate holding back his anger, frustration, and fear would break.

I visited Jeremy as often as I could. One night I went to pick him up to eat dinner with Dad. Making small talk with Jeremy's mother, I knew we would have to leave or be late. I fidgeted around with my watch and looked apologetically at her. She was about an inch shorter than I was (which was short), and about twenty-five pounds overweight. Her hair was wild and frizzy. Maybe she had had one too many frostings. She always wore a wide smile on her face so that, looking at her, I was reminded of Twiddle-Dee or Twiddle-Dum.

"We need to go, so we aren't late." I was apologizing for some reason.

"Please come more often. You know you're one of my favorite people." She was pleading again, probably because she was still in love with my father. God, I hated it when she pleaded. "How about next weekend? You know you're welcome anytime. You know that, don't you?"

"Yes, thank you. You're very sweet."

She put her hands on my shoulders, eyes wide, shaking my whole body as she talked.

"You know, if things ever get bad at home, you are always welcome here. You just say the word and Jeremy

can move into his little brother's room, and you can have his. Wouldn't that be nice?"

"Oh yes, thank you very much. Things are fine at home, thank you." I was wriggling out of her grasp. "I'll be sure to keep that in mind." I had one foot out of the door by this time and called, "Thanks, bye, bye."

She stood in the doorway, holding the screen door open with her pudgy foot. The prefabricated light came out of the living room all around her, silhouetting her Buddha-like body as she called out into the twilight, "Come back when you can stay longer, ya hear?"

My car kicked back huge clouds of dust as we left the unpaved road.

"How are your grades?" Jeremy asked me.

"Oh, not so great, but they're getting better. What about yours? Shouldn't you be getting report cards soon?"

"Yeah, this week. I have all A's and one B."

"Wow, that's fantastic. And you're playing football, too?"

It went on like this until we got to the restaurant. I didn't feel grumpy anymore, thank God. I would at least have liked to not be grumpy. Once we were at the table, Dad ordered a pound of shrimp and a peck of oysters.

"Fine, Dad, but what are ya'll gonna eat?" I teased, actually laughing for the first time that evening. I was always teasing Dad that he was a man after my own heart when it came to food. Jeremy ordered the fried shrimp. As a kid, I always ordered fried shrimp, reluctant to try anything new.

"I just can't eat them things," Jeremy said, nodding toward the oysters.

"The secret is not to chew too long," I said, dipping one in Secret Sauce and handing it to him.

He made a face, but put it on his fork and stared at it for a while. He finally put it in his mouth and gulped it down.

"Jeremy and I are going hunting next weekend," Dad shouted above the din. I looked at Dad and it was easy to see how the past year and a half had taken their toll on him. Here was a man with four daughters. I was the oldest, and he had three small girls by his second wife. Now there was a boy. He used to roughhouse with me when I was young. When I'd get hurt and cry, he would say, "You're supposed to be tough! You're no son, but you'll have to do! Now quit crying!" He was only half-serious, but sometimes when I think about my father that is all I can remember—that he was always wanting a son. His blood pressure was too high, he worked sixty-five hours a week (no wonder he was always late), and he was balding.

As we left the restaurant, Dad offered to take Jeremy home, and I let him, since I had responsibilities to tend to that night. They walked me to my car, saying goodnight with hugs. I watched the two of them walking across the parking lot, the streetlights casting a luminescent glow on my father, with his arm slung over his son's shoulder.

*Jenny Crowder
Second Place, Prose
Muse Contest*

IN THE SAME WIND

Webster Grimes

"Woooooooh!!!"
trails behind a maniacal young head,
bodies scale the wire fence,
trying to fulfill their desires without materialistic
green. . .
the guard inspects the computer print paper with a
watchful
eye. . .
she is like a nervous child entering Disney World—
the key master accepts her password
and permits her into the new space of tolerable
insanity. . .
held in the cement blocks supporting this open
tent,
ripples of expectation tease her spine—
she breaks through the walls of expectation
to a scene never before envisioned. . .
her eyes meander through the flocks of fans
fleeing. . .
flying. . .
and floating in circles,
not knowing North from South,
winter from summer. . .
direction is irrelevant. . .
all have reached their destination.

Everyone exists as an individual,
no flower the same
but all waving in the same wind.
taking in the same life-light
and dark. . .
resting against the wall. . .
she embraces the comfort,
glances out at her temporary home
and realizes
all is well.

*Honorable Mention, Poetry
Muse Contest*

HAIKU

Endless sea of blue
connecting all foreign lands:
rubberband of earth.

Barbara Bryant

Chips of colored chalk
dust the earth with colors:
flower petals fall.

Mary Tyler Fore

Wasp wings beat like glass.
The lazy days of summer
shatter into fall.

Suzanne Quebedeux

Taken for granted,
dipping into the brightness:
the constellations.

Debbie DeBruhl

Tall cobra rises,
scales glistening in the sun:
nature's sly toast.

Emily Ferdon

Cool winds move the leaves:
undetermined directions.
My hand moves the pen.

Michelle Cress



Ink Drawing by Alisa Evans

DRINKING

Suzanne Quebedeux

There was a gaping hole in the wall.
It used to be a phone.
Daddy's fingers were raw
burger meat at the knuckles.
He was angry again
at something intangible to me.
Was it my fault?
My brother's deserted playpen was my refuge
from his actions and words.
All I could do was hide.
His breath, thick with liquor,
wilted me as he bent down
to tuck me into the comfort of my bed.
His bloodshot eyes glazed with tears
looked down on me remorsefully
for what he had done.
Staggering down the stairs,
he often wept. I heard the sobs,
and felt sad.
Like a bird without wings,
I fled without being able to fly.



*"Wheels" by Kristy Lawson
Honorable Mention, Art
Muse Contest*

IMAGES OF A CHILDHOOD FORGOTTEN

Mary Tyler Fore

A parental ping-pong match, using me and my duffle bag as a ball.

The monster in my bedroom and the murderer outside my door.

The baying of basset hounds and the wailing of my cat in heat.

The gin and tonic sewn to my mother's guilty fist.

A kitchen littered with pizza boxes and dirty dishes.

The sobbing.

My father's eyes swollen from anger and hurt.

Occasional acquaintances dropping by to play "Let's be friends."

My brother's alliances excluding me.

My Raggedy Ann doll.

A chair crashing to the ground and police lights flipping blatantly outside my house.

The sticky vinyl back seat of my father's car:
peace and quiet for a night.

THE WITCHES' BREW

Caroline Smith

This is a story of the Witches' Brew,
Anciently old yet surprisingly new.
Extraordinary spells, chants, and curses,
Where mystical herbs seem to flourish.
Covens lit by candle lights,
As cackling voices pierce the night.
Six slim figures envelop their lair,
Adorned in black with silky straight hair.
Sharp white teeth and emerald eyes,
Diabolical appearances they can't disguise.
Pale white skin and blood-red lips,
Robed in silks that cling to their hips.
Hauntingly beautiful and seemingly nice,
Enclosing hearts as cold as ice.



Pencil Drawing by Rosemary McIlhenny

AGAIN

Mollie Gowens

Grass breathing peacefully again,
shaking off winter's blanket
as the ground fills in color.
Flowers slowly exposing their eyes to brightness,
growing as their eyes expand,
seeing what they have not seen
for so long,
secretly smiling.
Trees forming their clothes for the season,
all using the same material,
searching for different patterns.
The sun peering down,
bringing warmth to nature below.
Authority over the inhabitants,
telling them when they shall go.











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