

G A R L A N D



S P R I N G ' 8 8





# THE GARLAND

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## EDITORS' NOTE

It has been a year since *The Garland* evolved to a visual format. And this issue marks the third year of publication since the *Chrysalis Edition*, which replaced the *Unicorn*.

We have held on to the visual format in this Spring '88 edition. But limited funding is as much responsible for this format as visual appeal. At a college with an emphasis in business, we find that we must work harder not only to catch our audience's attention but also to manage finances so as to get to the printer once a year. Therefore, it is our hope that you find this edition worthy of your viewing.

This year, you will notice two new faculty contributors, both submitting poetry. We thank them for their contributions. As our mentors, and frequently our inspiration, they signify the continuing cooperation between faculty and students in the production of this creative medium. And we thank the students who offered their labor to this art showcase.

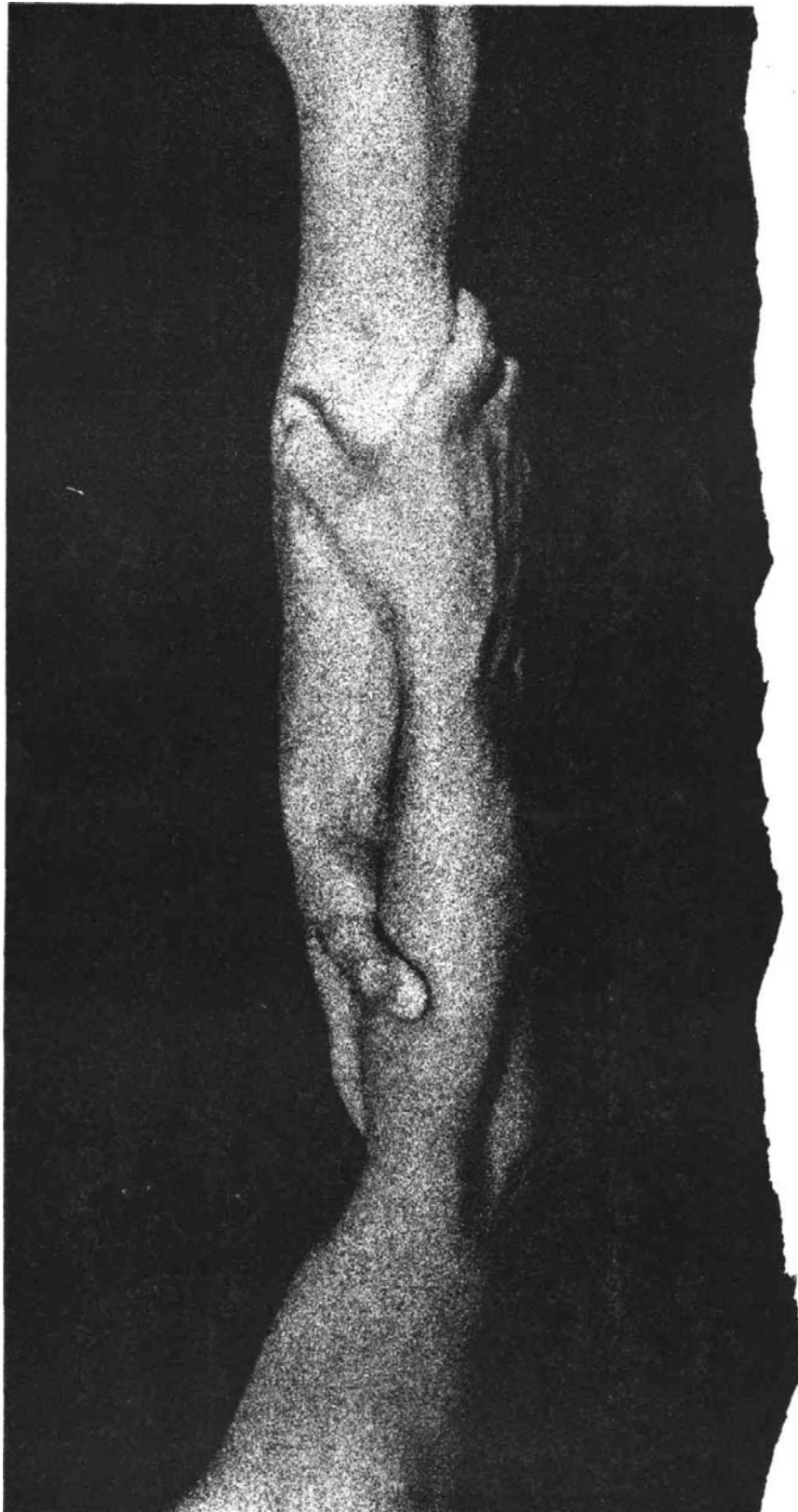
This is a transitional year for the leadership of the publication. Graduating seniors release the responsibility of the publication with glee, but also sentimental reluctance to those who will steer *The Garland* through the next few years.

We must also make mention of the *Green & Grey*, whose facilities made this publication possible. A strong student press actualizes these creative pursuits and publishes the expression of ideas.

In the following pages, you may find pain and pleasure. Some things may delight you, some may shock. But whatever you see in them, we hope that you recognize aspects of your inner self or discover new things that you never saw before. It is the goal of these ideas to shed light on the human condition. Should you find yourself, within these pages, on the edge of discovery, we have succeeded.

*Veritas Per Artem*

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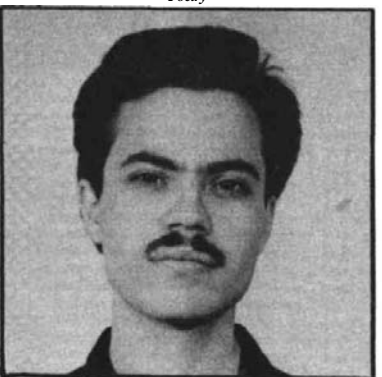
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# Skylab Is Falling

A SHORT STORY BY JOHN FARRELL

Skylab is falling. It is all over the news, reporters in raincoats standing in fields pointing at the sky saying things like "We expect it to fall any day now." Sometimes they predict its landing from a street corner, as if the threat of a large metal object falling from the sky and crashing on top of millions of people will raise curiosity more, or make us watch the entire broadcast from beginning to end. I am sick of Skylab as soon as I hear about it. It is one of those things that strikes me as no big deal and sticks with me as no big deal, even after Tina expresses her fascination with it.

We sit in the living room, the main area of her loft I should say, my head cradled in her lap as she sips wine from a glass. She is saying how great it is that man can achieve such a colossal transcendence, such a delicate bridge between nature and science, only to watch his efforts thwarted by some superior force. She would like to capture that force, she says, in a sculpture maybe, granite or metal. I let the comment pass without responding. Tina is always trying to capture something, especially when she has been drinking. I reach up, cupping the back of her head in my hand and force her face to mine. We kiss and she pulls back laughing, spilling rose on my forehead. I sit up and run both hands across my face, pushing what is left of the wine into my hair.

"What time is it?" She shrugs and rests her glass on the lacquer trunk in front of the sofa that acts as a coffee table.

"It's early. We have plenty of time. Fix yourself another and I'll be back in a minute. Phone call." She stands and stretches, then makes her way up the narrow ladder leading where her bed is. I move to the bar, pick cubes out of the ice bucket with silver thongs, and listen as they clink into place in my glass. I pour vodka until it covers the second cube. A wedge of lime.

Tina is shouting obscenities into the phone, words she only uses when she is very drunk and very angry. Sometimes though, she will use the same words when she is very drunk and horny. She will grab at me in the dark; she will heave her head upward and bite into my ear, using some of those words. But she speaks them differently then and it doesn't bother me to hear them as much. It bothers me to think that somebody else will hear her speaking like this and not know that she is drunk, not know how drunk exactly. It takes a lot for her to speak like this. I take a long gulp from the glass and rest it on the bar, letting my lips smack heavily together. I fill the glass to the bottom of the third cube. Another wedge of lime. Tina stops shouting and hangs up the phone. I watch her legs come down the ladder first, her feet falling silently into place the way a jaguar's do when it stalks its prey in the quiet part of the jungle.

"What was that all about?"

"Oh, nothing much. I straightened it out." She smiles lazily and inches forward, backing me against the wall. Her arms wrap loosely around my neck as her head settles into my chest. She tightens her hold on me.

"Nobody knows me anymore," she whispers painfully, "but you do, right Gawain?" I smile.



"I understand you, Tina." She cries, delicate sobs that don't make a sound, barely wetting my shirt. At least I think I understand her, it is hard to tell lately. But it is always hard to tell with Tina. I suggest getting out of the apartment and grabbing something to eat, Polynesian maybe. She says she is tired and that it is raining out. "A walk might do you some good," I say, "It'll take your mind off things." She disagrees. A compromise. I will fix something in the kitchen and we will eat in bed. She says, "Okay." I kiss her forehead lightly and she climbs the ladder to get ready. I stare into the refrigerator. Nothing much. Some eggs, cheese, lettuce, bacon, a container of orange juice, some yogurt with fruit in it, half a loaf of protein bread.

The phone rings as we are finishing up. Tina answers, shrieks a big hello into the receiver, promises to get together with the person on the other end of the line real soon—they can catch up on things, tomorrow maybe. Then she says she can't talk now, she'll call back. Hangs up, and takes the phone off the hook.

"I hate being interrupted when I'm eating," she says.

"You're nearly finished."  
"But not quite, there's still some toast. Or maybe I just hate being interrupted. That sounds more likely. They should have known better."

"Who was it?"  
"Julie."

"Your sister?" She shakes her head.  
"Julie and Geoffrey. That Julie." I put my glass on top of my plate next to the fork and place them on the floor. She takes a bite of toast and does the same, holding the remainder of bread between her index finger and thumb. I can't place the names. She polishes off the toast.

"Do I know them?" She laughs, licking a dot of butter from her thumb, and rolls onto her side, facing me.

"How come you never remember meeting any of my friends?" I don't know why. I guess that I am just bad with names, but she says she doesn't buy that.

"We bumped into them the weekend before last at The Lion's Head. Julie's really sweet and very pretty. Blonde, sexy—you like blondes, don't you?" I nod, smiling, and stroke her thigh with the back of my middle finger. "I met her about a year ago, no two, at a showing in Soho. She's into post-futurism, heavily. Geoffrey's her boyfriend. Yuppie-type, accounting I think, with T. Rowe Price, no Price Waterhouse—I don't know, someplace with price in it. Anyway, you were talking to her." The name doesn't register. I am always talking to people when I go out with Tina, and they are always very pretty, even the guys. I move closer, settle my left hand on her breast and kiss her. Tina guides my mouth to her neck and continues talking.

"She was wearing black. And silver, remember?" I tell her I don't.

"Was I very drunk?"

"We all were. Very." She laughs and presses her hand in mine. "You tried to pick her up." I stop and look at her, not sure what to say, unsure if words are appropriate. She laughs. "You always look

so pathetic when I confront you."

"Tina, I'm—"

"Don't bother," she says, "nothing happened. Julie wouldn't have left with you anyway."

"She wouldn't?"

"Geoffrey's loaded, drives a Ferrari."

"In the city?"

"I didn't say he was bright, just loaded."

"I'm sorry," I say, "never again."

"Never again," she repeats and moves closer, her face flattening against my chest. Her big toe strokes my calf. My face nuzzles into her hair, inhaling the fragrance. We make love twice that night, fall asleep with our legs and arms intertwined. I awake around seven as the sun claims its side of the bed through the skylight. Tina is lying on my arm, snoring lightly. For a long time I lay there watching her sleep, content with watching her breathe.

Have some coffee and leave the loft by 8:30. She says she won't be able to see me again before Friday. Lots of work to do. I have work to do also. It is Sunday. I cross the street and buy Variety from a small man inside a newspaper stand. He is wearing two sweaters, a tan cardigan over a black turtleneck. A Mets cap is pulled down far over his head so that the brim almost hides his eyes. He reminds me of a comic book villain I knew as a kid—the Mole Man. By day he was a respectable pharmacist in a neighborhood drug store, but by night he was an under world king pin, residing in the sewers of New York City with the rats and alligators and other vermin. We tried not to ask why a respectable pharmacist would want to spend his nights in a sewer, it didn't matter; when you're a kid, verisimilitude doesn't mean a thing. He doesn't look at me, just takes my dollar and tosses back some coins. I walk away reading the front page. When I get to the corner I have to wait for the light to change. Cars speed past, rear

beside my bed reads 8:57 in large red numbers. I lie down without removing my shoes and sleep.

My father was moving a dresser up the narrow stairs in our house. His face was red, swollen. His brother helped him, pulling from the top as he pushed underneath. My mother watched from the kitchen doorway, saying things like, "Careful of your blood pressure." The men didn't listen to her. Neither did I. She spoke fast, nervous words, more for the sake of having something to say than something significant to say. I sat at the kitchen table staring into my bowl, wondering if Corn Flakes were really good for me. They floated half-heartedly in the milk, some of them sticking to the sides of the bowl and peeling up around the edges like aging wallpaper. I pulled out a soggy flake with my fingers and tossed it at the dog, who was sitting to my right with her head cocked. Her jaws snapped greedily at the air. The flake splattered against the linoleum. She licked it up anyway.

My mother came into the kitchen saying, "It's no use talking to them. They don't listen." I placed my bowl in the sink without emptying it and moved into the living room. Nothing to do. My father grunted noisily reaching the top of the stairs. His brother said he could use a beer. I went outside, leaving my jacket in the closet. It wasn't too cold, just windy. Leaves hurled themselves in circular paths around the yard like angry angels. I sat on the porch steps and watched Rita Ragonne unload the trunk of her Datsun. Home for Thanksgiving. A typewriter, some books, two suitcases. There was more stuff piled in the back seat, but she left it there. Her father hugged her on the lawn, nearly picking her off the ground. Her mother stood in the doorway, flatten-

before she went to bed, crying under the pillow so no one would hear. I wondered if Rita's parents would fight a lot about things that never mattered before, like who forgot to put gas in the tank, or who's fault it was that the Visa bill was so high. I wondered if Rita's mom would pass out with a cigarette in her hand and nearly burn the house down, or if her father would stop coming home from work two nights a week. Mostly though, I wondered what would become of her kid brother. If she had one.

My mother's voice reached me from inside the house. She was mad again. "Get in here and pick up your clothes!" she shouted. I walked around the house and went into the garage, slamming my fist hard against my thigh whenever a tear rushed down my face. There was no use in talking, nobody listened. The world was a frozen place. All its heroes were dead. I sat on the garage floor behind the Buick and flipped through an old copy of Popular Mechanics. My father had folded back the pages that showed him how to reseal a refrigerator door. I turned the pages slowly, not absorbing a thing.

My boss is a woman. For a long time it never bothered me that she is a woman because she did her job and I did mine and we rarely saw each other at all. Mostly, we communicated our interests over the phone. Her name is Donna. Everyone around the office calls her the Ice Princess and now I know why.

It is early, too early for me to be in the office, any office. Usually, I come in at 10:00 and leave around 2:00. Most of my work gets done at home. Donna doesn't mind.

"What I *mind* is that you're not doing what you're supposed to do. What I *mind* is that you aren't listening to me. I am you boss, and as long as I'm in charge, you do what I say. Is that understood?" I nod. Her face has folded into small layers against her

forehead, her lips are a tight line. She is breathing fiercely through her nose, trying not to let her nostrils flare. Someone once told her that she has a typical Jew-girl nose. She denied it. I drop the folder on her desk and turn to leave. She flips through it again as the door shuts behind me, then tosses it down in disgust.

I am almost on the elevator when Larry sees me.

"Gerry, wait a sec, I got something for you." I look at him, puzzled.

"What?" He grabs my arm and pulls me around the corner so no one will hear, he is a very touchy person,

always grabbing, pulling or pushing. I am not.

"Remember Sheila? The one from accounts payable?" I tell him I don't.

"You met her last year at the Christmas party. Sweet, very fine."

"So what about her?"

"I'm seeing her roommate—"

"Yeah?" I know what he is about to say and want to stop him before he says it, but it is too late.

"Well, Sheila just broke it off with her fiancé—found out he was screwin' around—and she's always been kinda hot for you, so Debbie wants me to get you guys

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"Julie's really sweet and  
very pretty.  
Blonde, sexy — you like blondes,  
don't you?"  
I nod, smiling, and stroke her  
thigh with the back of my middle  
finger.

wheels clanking noisily against a large steel plate the city has placed over a large pothole. A black man stands next to me waving his hand, cursing to himself. He pulls his t-shirt high on his chest, almost over his head. He scratches his stomach and pulls the shirt back down, stretching it out of shape with his fists. He is saying something. To me? Yes, he wants a dollar. I can remember when bums only ask for quarters, but those days are gone. Wisps of hair duck behind his ears on both sides of his head, like someone has glued on washed-out Brillo pads. He is bald on top. I cross the street, shaking my head. He curses some more, then stops. Hail a cab and ride back to Chelsea. The clock

ing the front of her skirt. She was smiling, the kind of smile that mothers save for their sons and daughters who are just coming home for the first time after being away for the first time. It was the same smile my mother would have offered Barry if he hadn't dozed off and drifted into oncoming traffic on Halloween night. Their dog ran in crazy circles, barking and yapping. Her father took her bags. They all went inside. I stared at Rita's Datsun after they went into the house. I wondered if Rita's family would miss her as much as mine missed Barry if she fell asleep and crashed. I guessed they would. I wondered if Mrs. Ragonne would drink until she got very drunk every night

together. So I told her this weekend would probably be good, okay?" I run my hand through my hair, trying to steady myself. The last time I did Larry a favor, the woman was infected. Herpes. I was lucky. He stands blank-faced in front of me waiting for an answer.

"Not okay. And I'm late," I turn the corner and slap the elevator button twice with my palm. He follows.

"What do you mean 'not okay,' you *have* to," I check my watch, 9:05.

"I'm already seeing someone. Not interested."

"Who?"

"Who what?"

"Who are you seeing?"

"It doesn't matter, I'm busy this weekend."

"So cancel. Sheila's hot, and you'll be doing me a *big* favor—Debbie's really on my ass about it."

"So get someone else, I have plans." The elevator doors open and I get on, Larry follows. I wish there were others, but we are alone. I press the lobby button and the elevator begins its descent.

"I can't get somebody else, Sheila wants you. What's the big deal? You can cancel one weekend, can't you? What, you got a date with Vanna, or something?" He laughs. The doors open and we step into the lobby. I head for the door and he follows. I can tell that he won't let up. He grabs my arm to stop me in the middle of me lobby. A wave of secretaries floods the doorway and rushes past us, trying to catch the elevator before it leaves.

"Who is it? Tell me. She must be something, huh?" he smiles widely, his teeth catching the sunlight that falls through the window. I consent.

"Tina," his mouth drops slightly, stupid amazement. It shuts and tightens so the muscles in his face rise under his skin. He is loud, obnoxious.

"What? You've got to be shittin' me. Tina! What the hell's wrong with you? No wait, let me guess—she needs more money or someone to shit on?" He laughs, the scornful laughter of old friends turned bitter from neglect.

"Shut up, Larry." The security guard is staring at us from his desk in the lobby, his head moves back and forth, from Larry's face to mine, trying to draw conclusions. He is a man in his early sixties, just waiting. I suppose, to collect his pension. He sits there, expressionless.

"Well all I can say is that if you let that litte bitch destroy your life again, don't come whining to me about it. She's worthless, cut her out of your—" He doesn't complete the sentence. It is too late. My fist collides with his face and he falls backwards, landing on his ass. His legs jut out across the floor at odd adjacent angles. He stares up at me in shock as I pass him and rubs his jaw. The security guard is shouting my name, telling me to stop. But I do not stop, I keep going. Through the revolving glass door and onto the street.

It is Friday. The sun has already set melting across the Hudson, then fading back behind Jersey. I did not see this happen, but I've seen it before; it's always the same. I have been sitting at the bar for an hour when Tina comes in with two friends, a very pretty blonde and a very pretty guy. She is tall, maybe because of her heels, and very sexy; he has an average build, like someone who has been playing racketball three times a week for the past five years, but an exceptional face. Perfect facial structure, almost too perfect. Like David Bowie. I ask him if he can sing and he laughs. Tina moves to kiss me and pinches my arm—our

secret code meaning that one of us is drunk, or drunker than the rest, and should watch what he or she says. I look at her, smile, and say, "Okay." She takes off her coat, revealing a bright red dress, low cut in the front and invitingly short. She runs her hands through the back of her hair so it falls loosely over her shoulders, a thick brown mass. Her eyes shimmer bright green and glassy; she has been drinking too. Her white stockings have lines running up the backs of her legs and I wonder if she's wearing a garter belt. Julie removes her coat too. She is wearing black. A silver belt wraps around her waist three times so it looks like a snake; her shoes are silver too, very high heels. Her hair is longer than Tina's.

We decide to grab a booth so it will be easier to talk, otherwise the people at either end might miss parts of the conversation. Makes sense. There is an empty booth at the other end of the bar, next to the jukebox. We all pile in, hanging our coats on the coatstand near the door. The Lion's Head is a small, neighborhood kind of place, very familial, so we don't worry about having our coats stolen. Tina orders a round of Margaritas.

Another hour has passed. Tina is restless, but it's still too early to go out. We order another round of drinks. Julie is restless too, but doesn't say so. Geoffrey is talking about the guy in Florida who would have lost 1.2 million dollars to the I.R.S if Geoffrey hadn't been there to save him. I look at my watch, 10:15. The music has stopped, so I get up to check what songs are on the jukebox. I run my finger down the glass, stopping at selections I've never heard of, then smile.

"What's so funny?" Julie is standing beside me, studying song titles.

"David Bowie." I tap the glass above his name. She does not get the joke. I look at her, she looks at me; we both look back at the jukebox.

"FAME or MODERN LOVE?" I ask, trying to be witty. She gets the joke and laughs, then glances at the booth. Geoffrey and Tina are talking; actually, he's talking, she's listening. It's safe, neither one heard us. Julie decides to play along. She glides the polished nail of her index finger down the glass in a single stroke, then stops.

"SATISFACTION," she says. I smile and do the same, stopping at a song to her right. I pause, is it too pushy? Probably. It is by Anita Ward, one of those flashier tunes they play in clubs all the time. It doesn't really belong on this jukebox. It doesn't fit the atmosphere. I risk it.

"RING MY BELL," I say, half asking, half telling. She stops, looks at me, smiles. For a long time she says nothing, she just looks at me, her cool, gray eyes locked on mine. They are almost hypnotic, but maybe it just seems that way because I'm drunk. She touches the glass lightly with her fingertip, smiles, and says, "YOU CAN'T ALWAYS GET WHAT YOU WANT." I laugh loudly, then stop. Tina is staring at us. Geoffrey is glaring. There had been a lapse in their conversation. They heard.

The rest of the week passed slowly. Larry stopped talking to me at work, avoiding me whenever he could. My boss was somewhat less icy after I handed in my assignment the way *she* wanted it, but the fact remains that she is a woman, and any future conflicts which arise between us will almost certainly boil down to this one primal discrepancy: women were not made to dominate men. Thursday came and Tina called. She was looking forward to spending the weekend together.

"So what would you like to do?" I asked.

"Get out of the city. Poconos?"

"Not bad. What time?"

## There is a heart shaped tub for two. A complimentary bottle of champagne sits on ice in a silver bucket. Above the bed, a paper banner reads: Happy Honeymoon Newly Weds!

"Doesn't matter. Any time tomorrow, after four, no wait, seven. Okay?"

"Sounds good."

"Talk to you later."

"Love you," She hung up the phone. I hate saying 'I love you' to someone and not having that person say it back because it makes me feel overly dependent; like maybe that person didn't say 'I love you' back because she really didn't love me. Maybe it's a sign that our relationship is dead and that I'm in over my head and that I'm about to get slammed up on the rocks. I've been slammed before. Couldn't take it again. But there wasn't much I could do. I considered calling her back and telling her how I felt, but decided against it—she would think I was getting over-emotional and tell me to back off. And I didn't want to back off, not yet, so I just hung up the receiver.

There is a heart shaped tub for two. A complimentary bottle of champagne sits on ice in a silver bucket. Above the bed, a paper banner reads: Happy Honeymoon Newly Weds! Tina laughs loudly, dropping her coat on the floor.

"If they ever checked the records, they'd stop calling us newlyweds," she says. We have checked into the bridal suite before; four times in the last three months. If we ever do get married, we'll be ready for it.

"Maybe they *have* checked the records and they're just amusing us. The bellhop's probably laughing it up right now with the lady at the desk. Or maybe they've got it all on tape."

"Or maybe we're just preferred customers," she says. We both laugh. We kiss, then kiss some more and climb onto the bed. It is a water bed and it swishes gently beneath us each time we move. Tina stops kissing. Then I stop. We both lie still, she on her back and me on my side, not saying a word. I trace the slope of her neck with the side of my index finger, stopping at the collar of her blouse. She turns her head to face me and kisses my finger. She kisses it again, taking the tip into her mouth. I run my other hand through her hair, spreading it across the pillow.

"Bubble bath?" she asks.

"Now." We hop off the bed with a gurgle and a swish.

The water is hot. Tina squirts a long stream of bubble mix into the tub and runs the water again for extra bubbles. There are bubbles everywhere. She moves into me, bracing her left knee against my thigh, and bites my ear. I wipe bubbles from her shoulder and kiss it. The same with her breasts. She moves away, laughing.

"A toast," she says, reaching over the side of the tub and raising her glass, "to having everything, and never wanting anything, ever again, for the rest of our

lives." Our glasses clink lightly and we drain the champagne. A refill. We sit opposite one another, our backs against the sides of the tub, stroking each other with our feet. Some toes rise through the surface of the water and she wiggles them. I move to grab them, but her foot submerges, settling between my legs. I smile.

An hour passes and we leave the tub. Dry off and get into bed. We make love three times, then rest a while. Her skin is smooth and soft. The bubbles and sweat have made it silky. I glide my hand up and down her arm without thinking. She cannot sleep. Neither can I.

"That feels good," she says.

"Good."

"Can we talk?"

"Sure."

"About us? Truth?"

"Truth," I say, unsure if truth is such a good idea.

"I love you Gerry," she says, "and I need help. I want to open a gallery."

"What kind of?"

"Julie has some connections. All I need is some cash up front. We're going to be partners—she already owns one in Soho, it's doing great. I know this one can work —"

"That's what you said about the boutique—"

"This is different. Julie's helping me, she knows what she's doing—"

"So why can't she front the money?"

"She already is, half. I need the other half if we're going to be partners—"

"What's wrong with a bank? Did you try for a loan?"

"I can't, my credit's dead. I wouldn't ask you, I swear I wouldn't, but you're the only person I know who could help me with that kind of money. You're the only rich friend I have. And—"

"I'm *not* rich."

"I meant well-off."

"It's an inheritance. There isn't much left, you know."

"I swear, this will be the last time.

Never again. I promise."

"Never again," I say, "this is the last time."

"I promise. Is it okay, I mean, do you mean it?"

"You can have the money Tina."

"Oh, God, that's great! I can't wait to tell Julie! This is so great!"

"Where are you going?"

"Shower, I'm all soapy. Be right back."

She goes into bathroom and closes the door. She turns on the water, probably very hot. I get off the bed and turn on the television.

The eleven o'clock news is still on. An up-

date, live coverage. There is a reporter standing in a field, wearing a raincoat. The wind blows his hair one way, then the other.

"Skylab is falling," he says, "we expect to see bits and pieces of it any day now." I move to the window and open it. Stick my head out into the dark and stare at the sky. Inside, the T.V., blares noisily behind me, but I can't make out what it's saying.

END



## A SHORT STORY BY ERIC BLOMQUIST

## RETREAT

Traffic is moving slowly tonight. A long strand of headlights unravels from downtown, winding west, snaking across the flat land of the Maryland Piedmont. A few hours after sunrise, the trees of the Allegheny Mountains will catch the wind and light like the giant sails of Viking longships one finds in history books. Often when I think of strong colors, my mind turns to the picture of these thin, graceful boats and how their bright sails must have looked to confused English villagers

watching from their rocky grey coasts. The painted shields hung along the gunwales must have added to the effect. Several scientists at the Trinity site described a nuclear mushroom cloud as the most beautiful thing they have ever seen.

There is no moon tonight. The sky brightens a little as dark clouds, visible only as a lack of stars, blow east, out toward the Atlantic. Now a few stars outline the distinct silhouette of a barn—tall, stiff, and awkward against the night sky. On both sides of the highway, houses become rarer, more isolated, like the separated pieces of a jigsaw puzzle or the leaves still left on a tree in November. The small centers of activity look deceptively self-contained and remind me of the medieval Passion plays I studied in college which were staged outside in amphitheaters—large, round hollows of land, with the people of nearby towns sitting on the slopes surrounding the center. In order for everyone to see, the action would occur on several different platforms, each representing a particular place and time, while the space in between these stations, or "places," was to be ignored by the audience, and had no real symbolic existence except for on those rare occasions when a messenger would pass through, reciting lines on his way from place to place.

This morning at 9:00, I started my Allen Ginsberg lecture in the usual way: "I was going to wear my peace medallions today, but I couldn't find them at home." As always, I felt the immediate, though short-lived, twinge of guilt for using the cheap, easy joke—I felt like a politician sometimes. A few students laughed nervously. One of them, a red-haired girl in the second row, reminds me of my wife Mary at that age, except this girl wears a fashionable Benetton sweatshirt. Mary has made a rule of not wearing anything bearing a visible company name. She was wearing a light green dress when I first met her. She had responded to a want ad I had placed for someone to type my thesis paper on modern poetry. Every afternoon for about a week, she came over to my seventh-floor apartment to type, and I paid her by the page. The spring days were hot and the still, humid air formed clouds at about the same time each afternoon. Mary sat at the dining room table, her back to the apartment window. The alternating bright light and shade which passed through the room made her look even stiller than she was, like a wax figure. Except for her fingers. Her long nails hit each typewriter key delicately and precisely; her rapid tapping and the low electric hum of the machine were the only two sounds in the room. I looked out the screened window at the dull black roofs of houses, then back at her. I paused, then spoke slowly, leaning my words against each other as if I were building a house of cards. "Mary," I said. The tapping slowed. "There's a really good exhibit opening down at the art museum next week. Would you be interested in going to see it with me? Maybe we could get dinner and—" "Oh sure! I'd love to."

That Saturday, when I took out the trash, I noticed several fully typed pages crumpled in the wastebasket. Most of these were perfectly typed, some of them as many as three times over.

The night is cooling fast. I roll up the window and turn the heater on low. The land is gently rolling now. A long white fence of broken boards trails along the right side of the highway. There is a streetlight near the wide gate. A large "Private Property" sign is nailed to a nearby tree.

From here, it's about five hours to my brother's orchard in West Virginia.

In early September, at the beginning of the semester, we were walking along one of the wide cobblestone walkways that stretch across the campus. I walked on the outside, next to a small road, and held her right hand while she ran her left hand across the warm black spikes of the newly painted iron gate outside the president's house. Her light tan skirt, crowded with large swirling paisleys, blew behind her as she walked. Campus was crowded, and I was nodding to some of my first students, whose names I didn't know yet, when I heard her skirt rip on the bottom of the fence. I started to turn around, but Mary reached her arm around my back. "It's just a small tear—don't worry about it," she said almost nervously. "Let's keep walking." Mary would go to ridiculous lengths to avoid making a scene.

She was certainly the prettiest girl I had ever met, and I felt a kind of pride when we took long walks in the city and I watched how her red hair rested high on her shoulders, around her face, which always held a soft but determined expression. Her light freckles were noticeable only as the warm pink tint of her skin when she smiled, or when she was upset and keeping something from me. Though I enjoyed our occasional long conversations, we rarely talked. From what we had discovered of each other's opinions about religion and politics (my first vote had been for McGovern and hers for Nixon), we each decided separately never to try to achieve any kind of agreement or attempt any persuasion in certain forbidden areas. Her Kennedy jokes and my Ronald Reagan impression left little room for compromise. I sometimes think that it was this silent opposition and selective lack of communication that kept us together so long, like two parallel lines drawn close together. I never thought of Mary as "my better half," but considered her my opposite but necessary half, the positive or negative pole. I'm not sure why I often longed for the innocuous, sometimes almost inane conversations we would have about ourselves, music, or even the weather, but it reminded me at times of stories I had read about certain heat-crazed sailors who would start drinking sea water.

It wasn't long before proposing seemed like an inevitability. Our wedding was traditional. Mary wore her mother's wedding gown. I suggested that we spend our honeymoon traveling through Europe, but Mary insisted on a quiet week at her parents' five-room summer cottage in New Hampshire. The small wood house was painted dark red and sat at the top of a grassy hill with a view of the Saco River. Flowers and hedges straggled down the hill, almost to the water. The first morning dawned mild and bright. I stood in front of a large window, running my hand across the cold glass, and waited for Mary to wake up. Pine trees were scattered across the wide green hills. The old family gardener bent low, close to the window. I held an apple in my mouth. Mary's slipped footprints scuffed closer, and her light hand on my shoulder was like wet snow on grass. Outside, shears scraped down the gentle slope, closer to the river below, the noise of the shears eventually drowning into the distant rushing of water.

Mary fit in well with the other professors' wives. She had a "circle of friends" in the truest sense of the word—a circle like the round ripple of water just disturbed by a falling stone. Inside this circle was the concentric circle of our young family. I was never sure whether to consider Mary the minutest circle of water, closest to where the stone had sunk, or to see her as the stone itself, in all of its compact certainty.

It was Good Friday, 1979, when Mary decided that we, as a family, should dye Easter eggs. Mary and I boiled water, poured it into clear plastic cups, and added food coloring. Our son Nicholas (never Nick or Nicky) was now three years old and had the closely supervised job of watching us dye the eggs, theoretically for the purpose of learning how to do it on some future Good Friday. Mary commanded him, "Don't touch the egg dye," and walked over to the kitchen counter to check how many drops of green she needed to make chartreuse. Before I could move, Nicholas grabbed the cup of yellow dye and decisively dumped it straight down the front of his peanuts tee shirt.

Mary spun around. "Nicholas!" She lifted him out of

the highchair and took off his shirt. "What a mess." His stomach was yellow. The dye had cooled enough so as not to burn him. Nicholas sucked in his lips between his teeth and then started laughing uncontrollably as Mary held him above the dishwasher. His smile, yellow stomach, and pale curls made him look something like an angel, or a fallen angel, might. I reached for the paper towels.

A few times tonight I have looked over to the passenger side, expecting to see Nicholas asleep, his head slumped over the shoulder belt, his feet almost touching the blue floor mat.

I rarely drove the car except on the weekends, when I would go shopping or drive Nicholas to his friends' houses or to the little league baseball games in which we finally convinced his mother to let him play. After Mary and I bought a small colonial house in 1980, we lived close enough to campus for me to walk to work. I enjoyed the six-block walk to school. The tree-lined streets and crumbling sidewalks of the old residential neighborhood gave a comfortable feeling of familiarity, of participating in an ancient ritual, somewhat like the way a drop of running water helps carve a smooth riverbed. Mary would sometimes be part of this routine and walk with me to my office in the mornings. Eventually, she came along only rarely.

Party balloons covered the entire ceiling. Nicholas's fifth birthday was the first big celebration at the new house. The swarm of kindergartners left the TV in small groups and sat down around the dining room table. I had just managed to light the five birthday candles with one match—the last year I was able to do so—and Mary was walking from room to room, turning out the lights, when Nicholas leaned over and blew almost all of the candles out. Mary rushed over. "Nicholas! You're not supposed to blow them out yet. You have to wait for us to sing 'Happy Birthday'." Nicholas looked blankly at her, then turned away and walked quickly toward his bedroom, kicking a plastic dump truck out of his way. "You get back here—it's okay! It's your birthday."

A few years ago, when the time came to prepare for Nicholas's eighth birthday, Mary decided to give him a cooking lesson. Cheese buns, she explained to him while opening a canister of ready-made biscuits, were a kind of family tradition. She took one of the clumps of dough, shaped like a small hockey puck, and stretched it with her fingers into the shape of a pancake on which she placed a chunk of cream cheese and a thin slice of butter. She then sprinkled sugar and cinnamon on top and folded the biscuit, crimping it closed around the cheese and butter. She did this five more times, gradually allowing Nicholas to do more of the work, until she said, "All right, the last five are all yours." Mary always had a lot of faith in Nicholas.

Nicholas, fascinated with the cold, damp biscuit dough, pulled it in every direction conceivable in three dimensions. He had jumped back when Mary popped open the cardboard canister of biscuits and seemed to attribute some hidden energy to the gooey, round pieces of dough, which he molded into what looked like the shapes of countries he knew by heart from collecting stamps and putting together a world jigsaw puzzle. After assembling four of his own cheese buns, Nicholas lingered over the last piece of dough, now formless like an unseen cloud. He pulled the dough until it tore in half, then stuffed one of the halves into his mouth.

Lucky I waited in line for gas this morning. The speedometer reads seventy-three miles per hour, but I feel almost still, as if I am walking and consciously between steps. I pass a white Mercedes. After its headlights disappear from the rear view mirror there is still some light behind me—the weak light of morning, broadening in the East. Trees become more distinct against the lightening sky, and I can almost see the full sail of the Viking ship. Its prow arches forward into a serpent's head high above the cold, choppy water—the dark eyes and sharp, curved tongue carved from sturdy wood. The hull is striped black and gold. The low gunwale is lined with shields turned backside out, each surface a strained, subdued white. Some of the younger men hold the halyard taut, but even when the horizon promises fertile green country behind a rocky coast, few of them consider not returning home. I drive faster now. Holding my foot on the accelerator is like agreeing to keep breathing.

## Doll's House

On her seventh birthday my little sister  
Opened a brown package from our Texas grandmother.  
Inside she found flat metal pieces,  
The sides of an unassembled house  
For a doll she didn't have.  
My father pieced the walls together,  
Bending the metal tabs into their invisible slots.  
The simple white exterior reminds us  
Of our grandmother's house, our bare  
Basement floor like the long-neglected fields  
That surround her home. Though it hasn't  
Been planted for years, the level land  
Begs rain from the restless sky.  
The power lines, stretched low across  
The skyline, collect black birds and make  
The picture real to my sister.  
Inside, my grandmother's favorite  
Afternoon shows flash indifferently across her

Black and white television in the empty  
Living room. She is in the kitchen,  
Ladling cool water from a basin to  
An empty jelly jar, thinking of how days  
Are the same, like brothers and sisters  
With too much in common.  
At night she falls asleep on the brown sofa,  
Remembering when she was young  
And would fall asleep hungry.  
Her right hand brushes the wedding band  
On her clenched ring finger.  
It's hard not to forget  
While trying not to remember too much.  
The TVs pale light fills the room.  
Stars coax dawn from the horizon.

*by Eric Blomquist*



## Joseph

*"Looking Glass is dead."*

## June

The wet-marsh smokes  
low, silky, wide,  
hardly more than horizon

seen from here: its mists  
rise in silver  
to meet the semi-light

first dawn or false  
the illusion  
as when you dream you're reading

the page that put you to sleep.  
Illusions of rest, if you will.  
Or the illusory calm of forgetting.

And just when you mink you see  
the river itself  
or the sun behind the brake

or the true line of the shore,  
that elegiac division  
of new light from old...

This morning, over the river,  
the air uncools or turns.  
Fins brighten the water.

In the deeper grass there are passages  
of rustling quail.

*by Phillip McCaffrey*

I know this man, this  
father of dreams  
who sometimes occupies my nights

standing beneath the thick  
blanket across his shoulders  
and covering his arms

and his hands, too, are hidden  
as though withdrawn. He speaks  
to a point above and behind me

saying something in the old  
language, but soundlessly,  
since words have failed him.

Dark falls like a rain  
across his shoulders; his eyes  
are full of maps.

I tell him, "Now you are Chief of the Shadows,"  
but he doesn't respond.  
I cannot hear his breathing, or smell the dust

that clings to his feet, or his sandals.  
There is no ground beneath him now  
as if that, too, had betrayed him.

He stares out of his trance  
like one who remembers too much.  
I tell him, "I don't know who you are."

It doesn't bother him.  
He is finished talking.  
There is a wind somewhere behind him

I do not want to name.

*by Phillip McCaffrey*



# IS MOM WINS VISITS

hat summer.

The judge also ordered the adults in the case to undergo counseling to ease the emotional burden on the child, who lives with her father, William Stern, and his wife, Elizabeth. Stern, who hired Whitehead-Gould as a surrogate, have custody of Melissa.

"The court finds that Melissa's interests will be served by unsupervised, uninterrupted liberal visitation with her mother," Sween said.

in a written decision given to attorneys.

Both sides were planning news conferences later today to announce

vised visitation she won today.

Whitehead-Gould, an East Brunswick housewife who turns 51 today,

## Poem

Learning to let the mind lift itself up  
without thought,  
learning the hollow shock of the chest  
with air knocked out,  
mind knocked out,  
where the swarming light sculpts  
a new stillness.  
Brought like Jonah  
to the innermost belly of words,  
always,  
where the swarming light lifts  
like the sight of a hawk  
from under the weight of an ocean  
and sculpts a destiny for us  
so small that we repent,  
still.

by Joe Wenderoth

# The Dukak

By Jules Witcover

Evening Sun Staff

MILWAUKEE — It's Michael Dukakis and Jesse Jackson down today as the Democratic presidential see-saw keeps going this time as a result of Dukakis' victory over Jackson in the Wisconsin primary.

Recovering in the Midwest from defeats at the hands of Sen. Paul Simon and Jackson in Michigan, Dukakis is now heading for the April 19 New York primary restored as the clear Democratic front-runner with important strategic advantages.

■ Germond and Witcover: Jackson "phenomenon" goes pfft.....A3

Jackson continues to attract many Jewish voters who perceive him as firmly aligned with Arab nations in their pursuit of a Palestinian homeland, and because of his past associations with Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat and black nationalist

## LATE NEWS

### Driesell gets JMU job

Lefty Driesell was named the head basketball coach at James Madison University today.

Driesell, 54, coached the University of Maryland for 17 seasons and compiled a record of 348-156.

He has been an assistant athletic director at Maryland since being forced out as basketball coach four months after the drug-related death of All-America Len Bias.

See earlier story Page C1.

# Sun

25 CENTS

## with lead

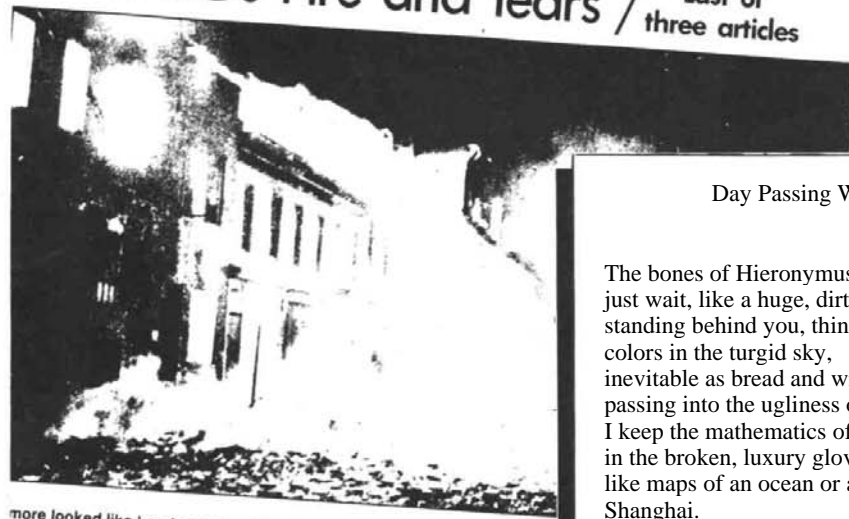
These advantages is expected support in New York's primary, which constitutes of the Democratic primaries has been a staunch and his wife, Kitty, is

Louis Farrakhan.

Before yesterday's vote in Wisconsin, Jackson had hoped to come roaring into New York with a victory in this Midwestern state constructed mainly on support from white voters. Wisconsin has a black voting-age population of only about 3 percent, but Jackson thought he might make up for that shortfall with a heavy white blue-collar vote, nurtured in several years of protest in support of strikers and other workers facing plant closings.

See CAMPAIGN, A4, Col. 1

## 1968: Fire and tears / Last of three articles



more looked like London during Blitz despite hope of Mayor D'Alesandro.

## erson overwhelms city, leaving officials helpless

By Robert Hilson Jr.

Evening Sun Staff

WOLLS OF dark smoke curled enormously over the rooftops of east Baltimore. Below, a storm unbridled for two days before g in a streak of violent de-

yond the city line, drowned out even the blare of fire and police sirens.

Community leaders and fire officials could do little as fury and fire overwhelmed the city's public-safety mechanisms.

"So they just seemed to

## Day Passing Without Snow

The bones of Hieronymus Bosch wait,  
just wait, like a huge, dirty sea-gull  
standing behind you, thinking your thoughts,  
colors in the turgid sky,  
inevitable as bread and wine  
passing into the ugliness of these rooms.  
I keep the mathematics of truth in my car  
in the broken, luxury glove compartment  
like maps of an ocean or a Chinese city—  
Shanghai.  
I sing a lullaby for no one  
in a dead language  
like a small wooden bird  
in the hand of a blind man.

by Joe Wenderoth

## Harford seeks probe of Peach

Council last month speculates that the cracks could cause an emergency cooling system at the plant to fail in the event of an accident. The report says "this crack may represent a generic concern for

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which led to the

**Paul By**

Monkton

In your "Conspiracy of greed" editorial (March 25) about alleged greed by insurance companies raising rates for malpractice and ability insurance, your editors have been accused of "the pot calling the kettle black."

When The Baltimore Sun  
out to the Times Mirror Co.  
company stated that it wished

garner at least 13 percent on its investment. It so happens that the casualty insurance industry earned 13 percent on its net worth in 1987 whereas Times Mirror earned 19.5 percent on net worth. Presumably, this included The Evening Sun's contribution.

Sn who's calling whom greedy?

rica, Philippines, Iwo Jima, Saipan, Tarawa, Guadalcanal, New Guinea, Bataan. Corregidor? All places where the vets of World War II fought and died. The Nam vets never had to sweat out crossing almost 3,000 miles of ocean and the thought that every yard could bring a German or Japanese torpedo into their ship. They also deserve a memorial.

**Bob Crooks**

Bob Crooks

Baltimore

I have always been opposed to contra aid. However, I was very

For the Citizens of Heaven

— *after Yannis Ritsos*

I would write a poetry of broken chairs,  
a candle overlooked at the height of day,  
filthy window-frames high above a cat in the sun  
on a leash. I would mention the immense shadow  
fallen from the old church; it is one shadow,  
a toothless and tongueless mouth  
readying itself to tell the story of our lives.  
I would draw the ludicrous posture of death  
huddled in a ranstorm, crouched in the silence  
that divides the dust of spring  
and shows me the way home.

I would photograph the last collapse —  
its stubborn silence, its pointed invisibility —  
in simple buildings, in human faces.

I would love to proclaim the immunity  
of my hands, in their words,  
concerning this falling to emptiness,  
falling again, but I will not.

My hands are only as skillful and distinct  
as my feet when I write— my hands  
must become my feet to be able to write  
about my hands —and I stand on one foot  
in the pouring rain, scribbling out these poems  
in white chalk on the sidewalk.

My bitterness is never the point, and yet  
only tears lead me back out into the street,  
back into the unimaginable present,  
and the rain on my back.

*by Joe Wenderoth*

Regarding your editorial "Avoiding the issue" on increased state funding for abortions for poor women (March 11) if you would grant Governor Schaefer the right to change his mind you might have a plausible answer to your question. "How does he justify his quixotic about-face on this difficult and stormy issue?"

To say that "government won't be able to function if taxpayers are allowed to choose the programs they want to pay for" is simply amazing, coming from an experienced editorial staff. Don't taxpayers, through

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**Peter A. Dacey**

Peter A. Dacey

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A 19

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April 6, 1988

**S**

are the byproduct of  
the communist or capis-  
t continuation of this  
is hardly something to  
an "alternative vision."  
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— Baltimore, Nashville,  
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c questions

ts flaws, the questionnaire assessment — if only by the public which reads — of the state of U.S.-USSR relations in the wake of the Gorbachev visit to Washington and Moscow. The Cold War on the back have begun to focus on the common interests and not what divides

Harry Piotrowski is an associate professor of history at Towson State University.

**B**ESIEGED by prosecutors, convicted in two federal cases and claiming harassment by reporters, Clarence M. Mitchell 3rd was looking every bit a scoundrel in recent months.

But all that changed on Thursday.





## A SHORT STORY BY JAMES LOSCALZO

I was twelve when I first saw Daryl Trumble looking out his window for me to get home from school. Actually, I had only caught the blur of his head ducking away. So the next day I walked home through the other side of the trailer park, coming up behind the Trumble home. I kept my back and arms against the sides of their trailer as if I were walking a ledge. When I turned the corner I knelt to the ground and wormed with my elbows through the first daisy buds and under Daryl's window. I paused on my stomach for a few moments, smiling at the fresh dirt between my fingers and the pressure of my breasts on my chest.

Looking up I could see the three panes of Daryl's window extended out from the frame like slabs from a Venetian blind. They're raised from the inside by little cranks 'cause the screens don't pop out. Mrs. Underhill usually commenced the warm season by being the first woman to vent her windows. She had so many windows, in fact, that when all were raised her sixty footer looked like it might just fly away. The smell that had kept Mrs. Underhill warm in her trailer all winter' liked to slug around the park for a few days after this, sneaking up on anyone without a handkerchief over his mouth.

In one motion I grasped the ledge of Daryl's window and pulled my face to the screen. "Caughtcha!" I screamed. His face shook for a few seconds, his eyes wider than his mouth, his nose inches from mine. Daryl couldn't yell, he couldn't talk either, he didn't know how. Daddy told

me it was 'cause Mrs. Trumble took out Daryl's tongue when he was a baby 'cause her first son, Richard, spoke things normal people didn't understand. I always knew that was a big lie. Just the same it felt wonderful to finally see it there in his mouth, pink and arched, like a fat wave about to break.

Daryl fell backwards and disappeared through the curtains. "Hey! Hey boy!", I yelled. "You like spying....I betcha hidin

My daddy's legs were sticking out from under the kitchen sink. He was usually sleeping when I got home 'cause he worked nights at the railyard in New Haven. But for the past few days he had been laying in bed awake, probably from the smell of Mrs. Underhill's trailer. I liked him under the sink though, unable to fix something I didn't break. I thought that if I had a friend over at that given moment she would have liked him too, him work-

now starting to wiggle free.

"It's me", I said, lowering the volume bar on the television. He grabbed the top of the sink and pulled himself out. His face was pink with tiny veins worming over his forehead. His black hair was sticking up too, as if he'd been hanging upside down.

"Why didn't you answer me?" he asked, palming the hair back over his forehead. "I did!" I said, shaking my head.

"Well could ya put them things away and start on my supper. I'm going to work early." His face turned back to it's normal lurid color but his eyes were still pink. I leaned over the garbage bag but didn't see any cans. He didn't drink much, not just 'cause he couldn't afford it, but because it made him hate Connecticut. "One day mink I'll just hop on one a them cargo trains," he would say after a few Blue Ribbons, "and let it carry me wherever the hell it done please."

Daryl knocked on my door the next afternoon. He must have been standing out there for an hour 'cause he saw me walk home from school at three. The noise woke up Daddy and when he threw open the door and stared down at him Daryl just kinda swayed in the breeze. "You want Tara?" Daryl jerked his head once. Daddy turned to yell for me but I was right behind him watching. He knelt down and tucked in the front of my shirt. "You stay high and clear from that Trumble home, you hear me?" I nodded and shut the door behind me.

"Caughtcha!" I screamed.  
His face shook for a few  
seconds, his eyes wider  
than his mouth, his nose  
inches from mine.

under the window." The window panes above me were slowly cranked shut, pinning my head to the cool screen. "Hey! You got my head!" The window paused, raised slightly to set me free and then shut completely. I rapped on it a few times before going home to the trailer across from the Trumble's. But even before I stepped inside I felt his leer on me again. This time from his brother Richard's window.

ing on the house and all. But then he would surely start to stir. I stepped quietly over his legs and reached into the cupboard for some biscuits. Daddy stopped clanging. All I could hear was Tom and Jerry on the black and white. The longer Daddy didn't make any noise the louder the chase music seemed to get. I tiptoed back over his legs and into the familyroom.

"That you Tara?" he asked, his body



Hey Daryl," I said. "Can't you say hey?" He brought his hands to his shoulders and jerked them down. We were the same age but he was a little taller. Daryl didn't go to school so no one knew him 'cept the people in the park, and the only time they saw him was during Mass. "And how come you never come outside neither?" I asked. "Is it 'cause ya can't say hey?" He shrugged his shoulders. His dungarees were light green, like the color of pea soup. The pockets in the back were dark green though, so were the patches on his knees. He wasn't wearing any shoes. His feet were about three shades darker than the rest of his body. I could tell by the size of them that he was gonna be a small man.

"How come you been watchin me? Is it 'cause you want to be friends?" He shrugged his shoulders again and leaned his head back as if he heard a plane. His nose was filled with stuff, the hard and crumbly kind that's easy to get out. Daryl pulled out a five dollar bill from his pocket and handed it to me. It was worn and fuzzy like cloth. Some of the design was penned in where it had begun to fade. "This yours?" I asked. He nodded once and made a popping noise with his mouth.

"We used to have tons of money when we lived in Florida," I said. "We even had a sixty footer, bigger than Mrs. Underhills' and it had a pool in the back and everything! But Daddy lost work and we had to come up here. I'm moving back there though, first chance I get. Why I might even run away tomorrow." I twirled on one foot at the thought of it, showing how beautiful it would be. "Why I'd open a restaurant called Tara's Dogs and Burgers. And I could eat 'em outside off the grill everyday of the year cause it don't get cold. There's lots of mosquitoes though. Hey, where you from?" Daryl pointed to the ground. "But I mean where were you born at." Daryl turned around and pointed to his trailer.

I bragged to Daryl until the sky turned violet and the temperature dropped. I told him what palm trees looked like and that I was gonna be a policewoman just like Miss Dickinson. I told him about the sixth grade and the look on Mrs. Congelton's face when she came back from the office and us students were all hidden behind the cubbies. I even told him 'bout Stephen Carver and how at recess behind the bushes he gave me a week's milk money to touch my boobs with his index finger. And the whole time Daryl didn't move a muscle or nothing, he just stood there and listened.

The next day I answered the door before the knockin' got Daddy outa bed. On my way out Daddy called me back in. He was in his white tank top, propped up on two pillows with sheet marks on his cheeks and a Winston in his mouth. "That boy sneaks you into his house . . . you'll get a whuppin like you've never felt. That boy's momma, she crazy, that woman's crazier than all hell. So's his brother Richard. Why that boy even wears the cloth of our Lord . . . wears it in their trailer! I seen him marching around in that priest outfit like some lunatic Catholic, making the Sign of the Cross to everything he passes. I also seen the way he looks at ya from his window over there, him always praying when he's watching you. Think he's trying to save your soul girl."

Daddy lit his Winston, squinting his left eye as he inhaled. "Daryl's gonna be crazy too," Daddy said, "it's in the poor boy's blood. Never had a chance. You wanna keep your ass soft you just keep it away from them Trumbles."

My daddy says your brother is crazier than all hell, is that true Daryl?" He looked down and plucked away rocks with his big toe. "Daddy says Richard's been wat-

chin' me too." Daryl nodded his head and jerked his pea soup pants back up to his naval.

"How come Daryl?" I asked. Daryl glanced back at his trailer to make sure no one was watching. Then he bent down, drew a heart in the dirt with his finger and pointed to me. "He loves me?" I asked. Daryl nodded quickly and cradled his arms in front of him as if he were holding a baby.

I looked beyond him and thought I saw something move inside Richard's drapes. I imagined myself asleep in bed. My sheets clung to me like a dress, outlining curves on my body that I wouldn't have for another two years. Richard's face was peering in my widow, his hands pressed in front of his face. He prayed in whispers.

"So what do ya wanna hear about today Daryl?" I asked. He brought his hands to his shoulders and threw them down, then he pointed at me. "What about me?" He shrugged again. "You wanna hear a secret, one I haven't told no one, not even Daddy?" His eyes widened slightly and his fingers thumped his thighs. "I got a dog, his names Sarasota after where I used to live. I found him in the junkyard and I keep him there too, tied to the bumper of that old Fury on account a my daddy cause he'd whup me if he ever knew I had it. You wanna go see him?" He nodded quickly. I grabbed his hand and we ran through the park, each of us knowing the obstacles to run around and jump over.

The junkyard was wedged into a part of the woods where there were no trees.

There were no roads to it either. I guess it was just started by trailer owners too lazy to bring their trash to the refuse, the Fury's burnt out frame was the highlight, it rested on a tiny hill of metal and tires. We rummaged around it for food scraps. Neither of us could find any so Daryl ran back to his trailer and got some old bananas. When Sarasota heard us it jumped up on its hind legs and stood there, letting the black rope around its neck balance its weight. Sarasota was black too, I got the rope to match its color. When we got close Sarasota began hopping around as if the ground were hot.

"Sarasota, meet Daryl Trumble." The dogs head bobbed, its tail whipped. "Feed him Daryl, that way he'll like ya." Daryl peeled off one of the black skins and tossed the fruit up. Sarasota caught it in the air. Its teeth snapped into it, spraying our legs with soft brown banana. Daryl was breathing hard, kinda like a cats purr, only quicker. He tossed up another banana and quickly covered his face. This time it sprayed our shirts. Daryl turned to me, his eyes wider than before. This dog's the greatest, he seemed to think.

Sarasota sniffed around for banana fragments after Daryl had thrown the last one. "Go pet him Daryl," I said, "while it's still full." Daryl looked back and forth between me and the dog. "Go on Daryl." He stared at me worried, worried that if he didn't decide quick enough the chance would be gone. "Comon Daryl." I grabbed his hand and pulled him to the dog. Sarasota sniffed his legs and then started lickin the fruit off 'em like mad. Daryl's arm wasn't stiff no more, I stretched it on to Sarasotas back.

Daryl pet him like someone giving a back massage. He kept his fingers extended and pressed his palm into the fur. Over and over he did this with a single hand. Pretty soon Daryl's lips started to separte. When Sarasota began to arch its back for more pressure, Daryl's teeth finally came out. They hesitated there for a moment, like the pages of a book in my daddy's hands.

I took Daryl there every afternoon for the rest of the week, and then the week after that. The times just depended on when Daddy was sleepin. Some days we'd sit in the Fury. You could see the entire

junkyard from up there. The car was hallow, except for the backseat that angled upwards like the peace sign Richard Nixon makes in that picture.

Daryl liked to scamper on the roof of the car after feeding Sarasota. I'd crouch in the middle where he couldn't reach in and grab me. Then he'd dangle his head upside down in a window to scare me. His eyes would pucker and his forehead would turn milky purple, like the first mulberrys in March. Then Daryl would climb through the window and we'd lay in the backseat.

Looking up through the window frames all you could see was white. We could have been anywhere. I imagined the car was a plane and felt myself going up to it, going into it, and looking down at the world and its actual shape. The junkyard turned into just another rectangle among many. There was a creek winding cool and black through the woods. And there of course was my park, my trailer and my daddy, far, far below us.

The Suffex County Fair opened the first weekend in April. It was over in Oyster River but I convinced Daryl it was only an hour walk through the tobacco fields. I told Daddy that I'd volunteered to help Mrs. Congelton at school on Saturday to paint the background for our spring play and that I wouldn't be home till late. Instead I met Daryl behind Old Man Parkers garage.

I think Mrs. Parker even believed she could be young again if she prayed hard enough. But then her arthritis would kick in and she'd twist a little in her easy chair, watching me play through the window.

Mr. Parker had either the first or last trailer in the park, just depended which way you came in. He also had the most land. The prior summer I spent a lot of time with Mrs. Parker who liked to give me these orange, marshmallow peanuts and keep me up to date with the park gossip.

She also liked to talk to me about all the funny changes I was going through. Mrs. Parker even bought me a bra since I was too scared to ask Daddy for it.

Sometimes I could feel how badly Mrs. Parker wanted to go through puberty with me. She watched me with such envy, as if she too wanted to wear shorts instead of her sundress and drink water out of the hose and talk with me about boys and sex who we were gonna be when we grew up. I think Mrs. Parker even believed she could be young again if she prayed hard enough. But then her arthritis would kick in and she'd twist a little in her easy chair, watching me play through the window.

I never spoke to Mr. Parker 'cause he usually went into his garage when I came around. Once I asked Mrs. Parker what he did in there but she said she didn't know. "Why doncha peep?" I asked.

Mrs. Parker's eyes were magnified by her black rimmed glasses. The flap of skin under her chin swayed. "Guess I don't want to see," she said.

"Why?" I asked. "What are you 'fraid you'll see?"

Mrs. Parker just glanced back down at her cider. She was pouring it through a strainer that looked like the kind I used to pull crayfish from the creek.

She died in August of a heart stroke while pruning her flowers. The doctors said the stroke had caused her arthritis to stir up which, in turn, prevented her from opening the door and getting to cooler temperatures. There she fainted and there she died, on the front walk of her trailer.

After the funeral I started spying on Mr. Parker who was staying in his garage for longer periods of time. Before Mrs. Parker's death I figured he was just boozing, but now I smelt foul play and figured I was just the one to solve the mystery. So one weekday morning I climbed through the window and hid behind the black Packard they hadn't driven in eleven years, waiting for him to come.

The garage was damp and smelled like rotting wood. There was a thin white curtain over the window, softly diffusing what little light shone through. I figure it was round twel ve noon when Mr. Parker unlocked the door next to the window. He re-locked it behind him and sat on a stool next to the workbench.

There were four beams of light now, sloping diagonally from the window as if to support the wall. Mr. Parker sat with his elbows on the workbench and his chin on his left first. He clicked on a small desk lamp aimed at the wall. It illuminated a yellowing

pin-up of Rita Hayworth tacked to a cork board. He rested his chin on both fists now and stared at the poster.

After about a half hour I had to pee and figured I might just burst if I had to stay crouched another minute. There was no getting to the door without being seen, so I stood up and walked around the car. "Hey Mr. Parker."

He snatched a hammer from the workbench and spun around. "Who's there?" The hammer shook in his hand.

"It's me," I said, moving my face into the light. He leaned against the table and cupped his hand around his nose. "I was just hidin'. I didn't mean to scare you, honest!"

Mr. Parker turned back around to the poster. The dusty blue light shone on the side of his face like a crescent moon. He looked so tired, more tired than I'd ever seen him. He pinched his lips between his teeth and looked down at his hands fiddling with the hammer. "Don't cry Mr. Parker," I said, "I didn't mean to scare ya."

"She wouldn't let me keep it in the house no more," Mr. Parker said without looking at me. "So I brought it out here."

"That picture Mr. Parker?" I asked. He didn't answer, he just kept staring at his hands.

"I missed it so much," he said, his lower lip trembling. "She looks just like Carol did when we first started dating."

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## Sarasota

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He turned to face me again, his glasses hung crookedly over his face. "I was back here when Mrs. Parker couldn't get in the door. . . if I . . ." He touched his lips with the tips of his fingers and turned back around. I rested my hand on his back and felt him shake.

"Guess I can bring it back in the house," he said.

Daryl and I got to the fair by noon. We waved hello to the grazing bodies, the twirling rides. There was an entire tent for the freak show. It was just behind the field they use for the smash up derby and tractor pull. We could see the sign when we passed the last tobacco canopies and entered the parking lot. "Freaks!" it said in orange, drippy letters.

"It's not real," I said to Daryl when he pointed to the painting of the world's only reptile lady. She was bald and had lime green scales. She was standing with her claws on her hips, just like the women that modeled clothes in the J.C. Penny flyers we got in the mail. Underneath her feet it said, "Captured From The Savage Amazon Jungle."

Daryl walked around it as if he were trying to see a zipper. "C'mon Daryl, it's fake," I said, "and besides, it costs money. Let's go to the haunted house." He finally complied, but this time I had to stare at her. She looked so young, maybe sixteen. Wherever we walked her eyes seemed to follow.

I put quarters in two metal water guns. Daryl held the barrel of his gun up to one eye. "Aim into your clown's mouth," I said, pointing to a row of ceramic clown heads on the other side of the stand. Their mouths were hollow circles like on the smoking monkeys you buy at Howard Johnsons. "Whoever fills the balloon on their clown's head first wins."

"Are you ready doll?" asked a skinny old woman in a peach tank top. Her iron gray hair stuck out in three waves, two from the sides and one from the top. If she were green she would have looked like a dried clover. I aimed the gun with the trigger already pulled so when the water started it went straight into the clown's mouth. Daryl couldn't aim straight, he sprayed his face. I lost aim 'cause I was laughing so hard. So Daryl gave up and sprayed me instead. I charged him and put the gun up his shirt. He tried to pull away and wiggle his gun down the back of my Levis at the same time. It was the first time I heard him laugh.

The haunted house was just a big trailer with gray metal paneling. There was a short man with a red beard in a booth next to it. His wife was there too, she looked like the woman on the fattest lady in the world poster outside the freakshow. The bags under her arms sagged at her elbows as if filled with water. She was smiling at me and Daryl holding hands. "This costs money too, Daryl," I said disappointedly, "a dollar each." Daryl pulled the five dollar bill from his pocket. The man in the booth unfolded it and flipped it back and forth.

"I can't take this," he said, holding the bill outside the booth window. The woman nudged him with her fat hip and whispered something in his ear. His arm went limp for a moment, then he pulled it back in and handed Daryl three dollars and two tickets. The fat lady smiled even harder than before. The tobacco in her teeth looked like clumps of used coffee grounds. I smiled back and whispered thanks.

There were black plastic curtains at the entrance of the trailer. We pushed through them and everything disappeared. "Are you scared?" I asked without being able to see his reply. He grabbed one of the belt loops on my hands with his finger and put his arm around me. He couldn't see where we were going either but he moved without hesitation.

My trailer had gotten this dark sometimes at night since Daddy wasn't home. I never got out of bed though for fear of what I might bump into. But Daryl, he moved so much smoother in the darkness than he did in our world. I sometimes think that the few moments we spent in the haunted house were the most confident of his life. There were no other people, no walls or shadows. It was me and me alone he walked for.

Then up ahead I saw a play of light. I could hear a group of guys howling to scare the girls they picked up. Daryl hesitated, unsure.

We didn't say much on the way back to the trailer park. My legs were tired and my stomach was tight from being empty. As we walked, we stared at the white sheets covering the tobacco fields, rippling hypnotically in the breeze.

"I had the best time," I told him outside his trailer, not wanting to go home. "We can go feed Sarasota tomorrow afternoon, o.k.?" He nodded and I started walking backwards. He motioned for me to come back. "What is it?" He pointed to his trailer. "Oh Daryl, Daddy would whup me." He pointed to the gravel empty of my daddy's pickup. "Daryl." He motioned again, slower this time. My spot suddenly felt so comfortable. I didn't want to move. He slouched his body and jerked his head toward the trailer.

There was a stack of old newspapers in the family room behind their door. They must have been collected from the dumpster 'cause everyone knew the Trumbles couldn't read. There were boxes lining the bottom of the wall where the wood-colored boarding was curling out. The Valvoline box next to my feet was full of capped jars. They were homemade pitch, I could smell 'em. There was a big iron fan on a card table against the wall, aiming towards the right side of a plaid couch. The left side was missing its cushions.

On the mantel that divided the kitchen from the family room were a mess of pictures. I had seen this from outside their window and would always make up the images behind the glass. Only when I got closer I realized that they weren't pictures from this family. They were the pictures that came with the frames.

Daryl grabbed my hand and walked me down the hallway. The frames decorated the walls and were even in the bathroom where the toilet wasn't flushed. Daryl pulled me in to the last room on the right, Richard's room, and turned my body to face his bureau.

There were pictures of the Holy Jesus all around Richard's desk. There was even some bottled holy water, and two candles, one at each end. Daryl pointed nervously to one of the Lord's portraits and nudged my head for a closer look. Jesus's face had been cut out and a pencil drawing of my face was in its place. A crown of thorns was buried in my forehead and I was crying from one eye. And on the picture next to it, a yellow crayon drawing of my pigtails had been

pasted on the top of His head. Both sketches had been made on notebook paper. I could still see the thin blue lines.

"Daryl!" I screamed, "I'm scared!" he put his right index finger to his lips and shook his left hand. "Where is he, Daryl?" I whispered. Daryl put his hands together in front of his face. "Praying?" I asked. He nodded. "Where? The Church?" Daryl nodded again.

"I wanna go now," I said, "I don't like it." Daryl pointed to the dresser and to the both of us. I didn't understand so he did it again, only this time he tapped his eye. "Richard's been watching us?" I asked. He nodded, relieved. "Where?" Daryl pulled me to the window and pointed to the junkyard.

"Daryl?" cackled a voice from behind die door across the hall. I pumped and squeezed his hand. He shook me off, pressed his body against the door, and inched it open. All I could see was a woman's hand grippin the arm of a wooden chair. Her wrinkled skin was draped over the protruding veins like wet clothes sagging over a clothes line. She whispered something to Daryl and he went and got her a glass of lemonade. The finger in her hand arched like one of those tourists at Mr. Reider's auction, using the least bit of energy to make themselves acknowledged. Daryl secured the glass in her hand and started to close the door. She whispered something else and he left the door open.

"I gotta go, Daryl," I said. "I'm sorry I snapped at you before, I was just scared. Ill see you tomorrow afternoon, o.k.?" On my way out I saw the lemonade glass leaning in her hand. Beads of condensation were dripping from her fingers.

I didn't realize until I was inside my trailer that the front door had been unlocked. I ran to the window but Daddy's truck was still gone. The sky was just beginning to get that grainy purple color that meant Daddy's supper. I went to see what we had in the refrigerator and saw it through the kitchen window, my daddy's pickup, darkening in the backyard. It faced the back of the trailer so it couldn't be seen from the other side. There was no post ride clicking, no smell of gas. I imagined the truck's headlights gleaming on, the engine turning over. I went right through the trailer and ran me down. Then the whole park was standing over me at the burial. They were in a circle, crying and saying what a bastard that Mr. Ryder was. The coffin's satin pillow and ruffled lining, it felt so soft, so much nicer than my bed. "Only twelve years old," mumbled Old Man Parker, his chin trembling.

"Tara!" Daddy yelled behind clenched teeth. I walked backwards until I bumped the sink. Daddy lifted his khaki cap to rake grease stained fingers through his hair. I could see his missing eyetooth, something he rarely displayed. He saw me looking and filled in the space with his tongue.

"You disobeyed me girl," he whispered, approaching me as slowly as his speech, "just like your momma used to. Why you're even starting to smell like her, when you sweat that is. Girl, you gone an' done the one damn thing I told you not to." He grabbed the underside of my jaw and squeezed it, lifting up my head. "I was gonna whup you now, but instead I'm going to work. This way you'll have all night to think 'bout your beating tomorrow morning." He was squeezing my chin tighter and tighter. I figured that if he didn't he might just snap

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# Shelter

A SHORT STORY BY MIKE SMITH

The sun had just begun to slip behind the low midland hills barely visible above the skeletal reach of the maples and the scattered shag of the pines that skirted the road, its dim coronal red rolling down through the valleys and out across the fields still unplowed and hard to the norm of the highway, infusing the dirt and the wood and the stone and the dead grass on the floor of the forest and the few leaves left golden and dry on the branches, making the low sky one with the land and the red, the treeline thin and bony on the western ridges silhouetted, still wavy and solid in the faintest last light of the day, the cratered pavement and the ditches and the blazed trails winding back to the camps on the old oil leases amorphous in the glassy-smoked blur of the dusk, all shape and depth and form gathered up into its curtain, until what remained was color and shadow, wiping all lines away, one barely distinguishable from the other, neither yielding ground, waiting for darkness to fall. And then the sun wasn't there anymore, and the hills and the timber and the underbrush glowed warm, a shrinking radiance in the seconds after the flame disappeared down the hills, shot through with a thermal orange and amber vanishing, draining away from the thickets and copses like slow blood from the face after the ascension of life, back up through the shallow curves between the sweeps of the highland, receding again into the diffuse autumnal haze sinking slowly with the horizon, fading below the first splendid blue of a northwestern Pennsylvania evening.

Bobby pulled Danielle closer to him on the bench seat of the pickup, and she fixed her self in the bow of his arm, content in his worn flannel, settling in low and staring out over the rugged hood still filthy and streaked with mud from the four-wheeling they'd done a few hours before at the quarry, watching what was left of the red pass slowly away from the road like the undertow of a wave after the break. Bobby adjusted the rearview for a clear sight between the slats of the rack at the back of the cab and the one shotgun strapped across the center—an old Remington one shot running the length of the window—and saw the broken line of route 66 bend up over the crest of the last hill behind them and down to the 132 junction they had just passed minutes before.

The drive from the Sheffield quarry to the Methodist church in Marionville is a long one—the old two lane unserviced and forgotten by the legislature like most roads in the state—a straight shot cut through the ancient twenty-five mile stand of thick laurel and mammoth hemlock and

oak that overspread the old interstate in a nearly unbroken tunnel of branches and limbs now barren, their trunks set at impossible angles to the uneven gradient of the hillside, obscuring the faintest first gleam of the stars and the depth of the night.

Bobby had his eyes fixed on the road, the interminable streaking of bark and brush much too hypnotic, and Danielle was watching the moon out of the corner of her eye through the driver's side window, almost an after image at first, weak and gray-yellow, dirty and indistinct, washed out by the orange and the dusk and the diminution of light, but now beginning to shine like a pristine dime in the velvet creeping down from above, coming to her in flashes through the bundles of trees. "We're never going to make evening services," Bobby said wearily, talking to the windshield. "I wish your folks weren't such a pain in the ass about these things."

Danielle cocked her head up for a few seconds to face him, and then sunk back down to his chest. "Just take it slow, okay?" She spoke into the folds and red checks of his shirt, not wanting to move. "You know my aunt doesn't mind if we miss once in a while."

Bobby looked down at the crown of her head nestled in his torso, the clean rich hair more golden in the waning dusk than he had ever seen it before. "She'll hold it against me all winter, I know her."

"Don't be silly," she said quietly after a pause, "there isn't a thing she can do now anyway, even if she wanted to, and I don't think that she doesn't."

Bobby looked out his window into the sideview, seeing a heavy black moustache below two thin ovals of white reflected back to him on the glass. "What about you?" he asked, his voice lower now, resonant, from the bottom of the throat like a chainsmoker in a pool hall.

Danielle patted his side. "Silly goose." She closed her eyes and wrapped her arms tighter around Bobby, not wanting to talk, feeling secure and sleepy and just a little bit cold, listening to the muffled thump of his heart and noticing her own pumping a little bit quicker, the strong throttled engine rumbling beneath them and the rust flaking off in the longbed behind them, rattling and scraping, the whole machine shaking a little more than it usually did on the good roads of the county as it crunched over the rough patches of blacktop already breaking loose from last winter's rocksalt and ash and ice and the fury of season long snows.

But it was not winter now, and Danielle did not want to think about it

# Shelter

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anyway — although she knew it was coming—another long one like the fifteen she could remember and the five that she couldn't, the sky and the town and the people and the river all gray before the solstice arrives, and staying gray for much too long thereafter. But not this year, and not for her. She wanted to think about April, about that one early spring day, about the date she and Bobby had set and announced, the day she would become a bride, and the town wouldn't be gray anymore, but alive like her heart reconnected.

All the women in her family had been wed sometime in April, and her mother was always certain that an April wedding had God's own special blessing. She had heard how her mother and father were married on the fifteenth of April, way back in 1959, in the grand sanctuary of the Marionville United Methodist Church—the Reverend Isaac T. Clayton presiding—and how practically the whole town turned out to see them off with proper celebration.

The Reverend Isaac T. Clayton died of old age in some Unitarian rest facility out in Nevada. She was sorry about that. She never knew her parents either [the whole county said it was a real tragedy, their death, and left it at that], but she had seen the wedding pictures—her aunt kept them safe and untouched under the reupholstered divan in the living room—and wanted hers to be every bit as wonderful as theirs.

It was these pictures that she saw now, only they were pictures of her and Bobby, moving pictures of them dressed for the ceremony —she in her mother's gown, Bobby handsome and tall and light blue in his tux —her arm through his, standing secure, confident and happy and young together on the steps of the church, and then running down the walkway amidst the hail of rice and shouting to the only limousine in the borough that Bobby was certain no one could afford, riding off in style to Chataqua falls for the week they both took off from work, waving from the tinted back window to the crowd, the women all in pastels and white, smiling and crying at the end of the stones, and the men all in black shaking hands and telling old stories in the shadow of the tall portico.

She saw it all, and held on to Bobby for life, feeling the firmness of his muscle encircled by her arms. She knew that the winter would pass slowly, but that it would pass just the same, and she knew that she loved Bobby and that Bobby felt the same way about her, and if god hadn't blessed them already she figured that he probably just wasn't paying attention. Love was its own blessing, its own perfect grace, and that was more than just good enough for her. And the pictures all would come true. She knew it—things had already begun.

Bobby wheeled the big 4X across the trestles where the trains used to steam down to Pittsburgh through the valley below, and Danielle closed her eyes, remembering his as he was a few days before. Lord, she thought, was Bobby ever a sight when he proposed, and she forced herself to suppress the giggle she felt coming. He had slicked his thick hair all back behind the ears, unable to keep it from falling far over his collar, knocking at the front door jittery and wired in his work shirt and pants all oily and stained with the general grime of the refinery, his lean, strong arms washed to the elbow by the hands never totally clean, standing on the porch of her uncle's house in his big

boots just after the end of the third shift, rocking back and forth on the clumsy black heels and talking all around the moment which she knew must be coming, both of them shivering a little with nerves and love and anxiety and the promising bite of a strong October breeze, until he finally got it out and offered the ring that he hadn't quite figured out what to do with if things somehow turned sour, the band tiny and golden, tucked in the little blue box she could see stuffed in his breast pocket since she first opened the screen door, and the whole thing was exactly the way she figured it would be, if only a little bit more awkward — which was of course to be expected —and she kissed him and said yes and he hugged her and got her dirty and she hugged him and didn't care, and she remembered seeing in his face and his eyes the most perfect spirit of the gentlest man in the world.

She snuggled in as near to Bobby as she could, considering it all, allowing him only the freedom of movement necessary to keep a sure foot on the pedals and one hand on the wheel, breathing in slowly and deeply all of the smells she knew to be his — the cigarettes and Old Spice and the thick penetration of refined oil into the skin —taking it all down in, a steady respiration unlabored, like a child on the edge of a dream, feeling again the rhythm of the road and the motor and the heart.

Bobby could feel her drift off underneath of him, and as she loosened her grip and dropped her head back onto his shoulder, he pressed the accelerator a little bit closer to the floor —not too much—but just enough to make the tops of the trees whisk by just a little more swiftly.

Danielle shifted position, oblivious to the speed, catching his eyes as she turned and smiling for a second, resting her head in his lap and lying out on the big front seat of the Dodge, getting as comfortable as she could, her knees bent up and the canvas tips of her sneakers just touching the opposite door panel, her feet propped up and angular on the armrest.

Bobby put both hands on the wheel after he flipped on the radio, being careful not to elbow Danielle in the throat when he occasionally adjusted his steering. She knew how to make driving awkward at times, he thought, looking down at the head of dirty blonde hair more silver now the new dark than anything else, fanned out over his thighs and fallen away from the girlish contours of that face he was sure, having once known, he would never easily forget, but he couldn't have minded it all if he'd tried.

It was almost completely evening now, closing in on the night, and all traces of the sunset and dusk had finally blended in and extinguished. The moon shone silvery and polished, out of sight over the roof of the truck but reassuring, its wide banded opalescence spreading out through the sky above the overhand of limbs. There was no other light to be seen for miles in any direction, save for the twin high beams of the halogens shot from the front of the truck, their binocular circles of white feeble and cautious in that primordial blackness the northern woods and trails and fire roads acquire after the working day has wound down.

Bobby tapped and slapped on the top of the steering wheel, laying down the backbeat to a bluegrass tune coming over scratchy and low on the radio, a hayseed arrangement in mandolin and Jew's harp of Beethoven's "Hymn to Joy," lilting, twangy and hillbilly.

Bobby thought it a little early in the season for a Christmas song—at least mat's what it reminded him of—but he drummed right along anyway, feeling the woman he would marry laid out catlike beside him, still willowy but cramped in the space between the dash and the back

of the seat, trying hard to remember the words to that song—something to do with angels and all of the earth—but he just couldn't quite get it. Danielle knew the words, and sang them inside of her head like an affirmation of God's own special blessing, lulled into a deeper half-sleep by the movement and the melody and the warmth of a man.

The night had deepened further still, an iron, frosty indigo spied every now and again behind the wood tangled above the road; an inky pitch of nothing and indeterminate shape outside the reach of the light thrown ahead. They passed the Texaco station right before the sharp turn that leads onto the rail bridge over the Tionesta, the great plastic star of its sign as tall as some of the young trees, the air around it vacant of moths and other misfit insects of summer, imbuing all below it with a milky iridescence, mixing with the dispersion of hard luster from the hot tubes incandescent and humming under the beveled tin awning bent over the pumps. After the filling station, there would be no other life until Marionville and the front door to the house where Danielle had grown up. They were not going to make it to church: that much Bobby was sure of.

Beyond the next long stretch of trees to the right, the railroad tracks meandered out of the woods through a natural break in the slopes, and beyond that again the land leveled off, all the timber cleared away for a space, to a grassy plane thirty yards wide where the high voltage towers trailed back toward the far hills and the ridges below the gates of the dam. Bobby saw the break coming up and he knew they were close: the road was an old story to him, and he knew every section by heart. He reached over Danielle and clicked off the radio —the station having already decayed into little more than a grating electronic fizz —slowing a little and clattering over the tracks abandoned for years, and catching a moment of the night sky in its near totality as he did — the

beyond the rise of the next little hill. Danielle pulled Bobby's hand to her breast. She smiled and he saw her lips glisten.

The deer was big and brown and it slammed against the right fender of the truck easily pushing sixty-five on the straightaway, the metal of the high bumper digging in just above the back shank of the doe and crushing the hip, tossing it up over the hood with a whimper and the sickening thud of steel breaking up bone through the slick pad of fur. Bobby never saw it coming, charging down from the steep grade of the embankment above the run-off ditch along their side of the road, bolting wild and scared, bounding from the shelter of the laurel and timber and out into the perilous blackness, frozen in terror and resignation, the two eyes offset, dark and sparkling and mysterious for an instant in reflection, dumbstruck in the widening white circles and linear convergence of the on-rushing beams. And then the truck lurched forward and down, stopping with a hiss of hot rubber and the settling of rust. Bobby was trying hard not to shake, watching the headlights shoot over the tops of the trees on the far side of the road. Danielle cried and touched the blood smeared across the cut on her cheek; the other blood brackish and thick, stippled on the dirty white of the hood. They mumbled to each other and hugged.

Bobby finally saw the moon as he stepped down into the ditch, the truck listing heavily to the right side with only one tire still firm on the pavement. He grabbed a flashlight from out of the space between the back of the seat and the bedwall, and inspected the bumper, digging small clumps of hair, warm and matted and sticky, from out of the grill work. Then he saw the doe, hobbling and falling on three legs, the fourth dragging limp and ragged behind it, wounded and mortal, straddling the center white line, silent save for the determined scuff of its hoofs on the asphalt, its eyes unchanged, still radiant

A pair of shots rang out  
through the forest, one sharp  
crack coming a few moments  
behind the other, both echoing  
to the far banks of the river...

sparkling breadth of the milky way as one can only discover it in the backcountry — his eyes wide and peering down the axis line of the towers in either direction, the horsetail and high-grass of the clearing fluid and lapping at the cement of their bases, pushed into tiny waves by the bitter lake breezes, steel blue and languid in the afterglow of the moon. And then it was gone. Danielle was still half asleep on the seat, hardly disturbed by the rough ride, lost in the pictures. The night was quiet and cold, and Bobby could hear the measured chug of the cylinders pumping steadily under the hood. He put his palm lightly on Danielle's forehead, sweeping a few stray locks of hair from her face and gently stroking her arms, the brushed wool of her sweater like a mane to his fingers. Marionville was a small dome of dirty yellow haze a couple of miles or so

and transfixed in the darkness, struggling to die. Bobby looked at Danielle sitting up a little bloody and pale and red-eyed in the light from the bare ceiling bulb as he opened the door and reached for the .410 strapped to the rack across the back window, rummaging a few shells out of a torn carton at the back of the glovebox. He walked out to the road. Danielle closed her eyes tight but just couldn't for too long, too scared and too eager to witness the judgement. A pair of shots rang out through the forest, one sharp crack coming a few moments behind the other, both echoing to the far banks of the river and on down the road into town. A great owl flapped away. She saw the doe fall as the second ball ripped into the white arch of its chest, and watched the man with the gun on his shoulder walking back toward her, calm through the cold.

END

## Aberration

This December landscape is a harlequin  
whose riddles of tattered leafwork,  
grosgrain fields, the stark disinterest  
of guelder rose, all disguise  
what is painfully true.

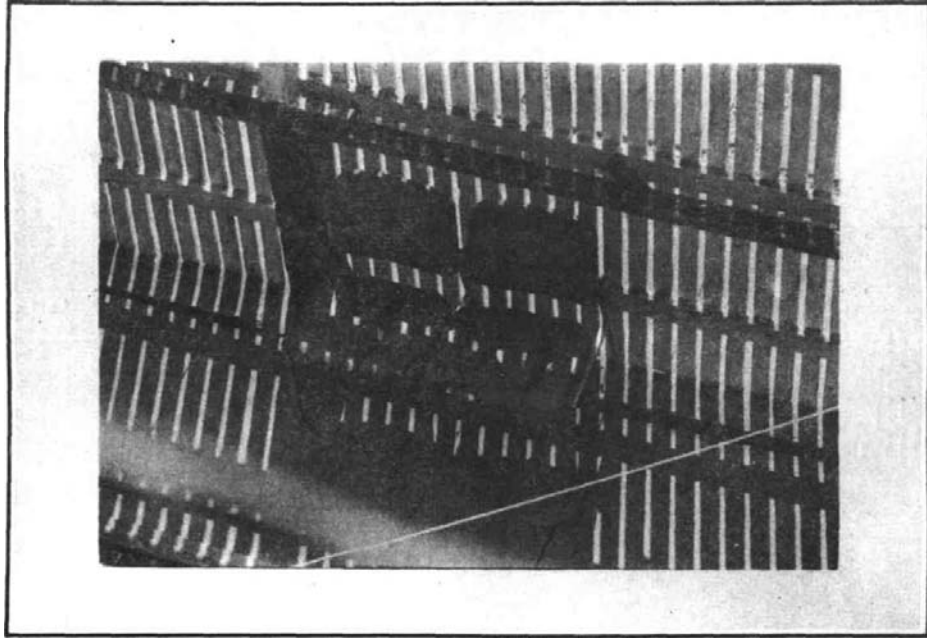
It tells me again of a young girl's death,  
as mists over the stream lift, stay a little.

We rummage through the bits and pieces  
of knowing the dead, like gimcracks heaped  
on a buckboard at a roadside sale, and still,  
we want to "see better."

But like the failure of a mirror  
to produce a pure image,  
it must come down to this: a knot

severed from the thin ribbon of blood,  
briefly set in a filament  
of slim bone until it slipped and  
traveled to the heart, quick,  
as fierce as a diamond flash, and  
what relief, those first few days of March,  
these fields casting off  
the oversoul of ice.





PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN BENZING



## White Birds

What amazes me most  
is that walking into the  
nesting grounds of twenty angry seagulls  
still made us laugh.  
We sat on the wet balcony of sand  
watching each black wave carry  
the reflections of stars  
again and again to the shore,  
leaving the sprinkles of light  
in a crooked splash—just a thin glow  
of foam, still fizzing.  
The party boat in the bay circled  
the charcoal sketch bridge  
a hundred times, reminding me of the  
Dutch canal boats humming through the  
veils of silver rain.  
Behind us the gulls slept in the  
dry beach grass and in the whispering dusk  
I thought of that winter night  
we walked in the city rather than take the bus.  
The icy air wedged its way in between the  
skyscrapers, and when the wind shattered it,  
throwing the stinging shards in our faces,  
we still laughed—  
at ourselves,  
and at the wind,  
and at the walking miles still ahead,  
seemingly deep as the velvet bay.

*by Joanne Maher*



## Constellation

I sit and wait  
remembering the time last summer  
you put three roses on the  
seat of my car.  
The roses wilted then dried like winter's hands  
and now fleck the lace on my bureau in  
shades of red, pink, and yellow.

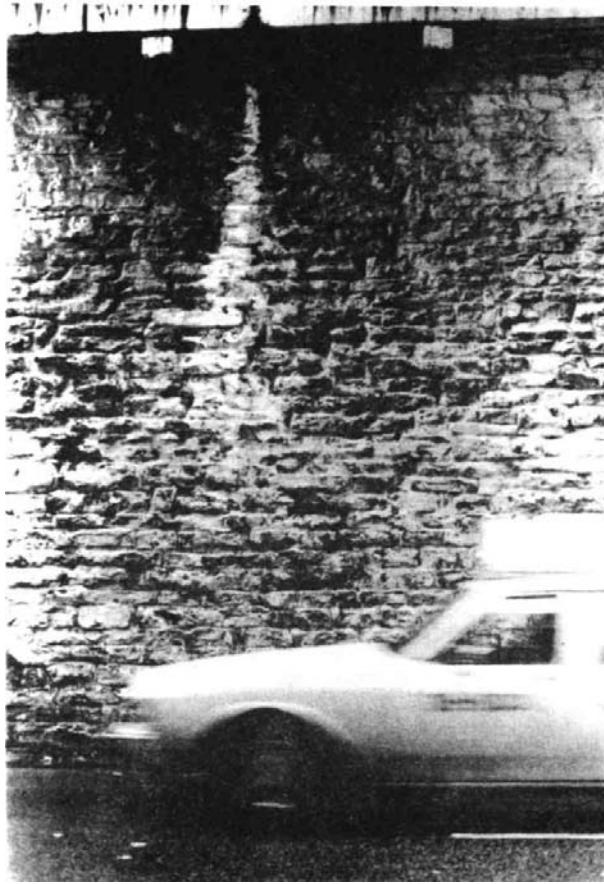
That night, we sat on the sliding board  
at Chapel Hill. Two children playing  
King and Queen, looking to our subjects  
wondering  
whether the wrord of Hercules could ever  
slay the Great Bear.

You held me in your arms  
as if the light west wind could  
carry me to  
autumn. So close I could  
feel your sweat through my cotton shirt—  
one bead surging down my spine  
chilling me like the ice cube  
my best friend had put  
down my back.

We scuffled down the steel, hand in hand,  
our footprints absorbing the light.  
I remember wondering if you knew any of this.

*by Laura Melia*





PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM LOSCALZO

# FACE



A SHORT STORY BY  
**SANDY  
MOSER**

Gary leaned against the bathroom sink and stretched his ear toward the mirror. He studied the pale underside.

"Now don't be surprised if everyone tries to talk you ear off," said Angie from the front room. She stood in front of the radiator, studying her face in a small mirror next to the window. She kept her makeup on top of the radiator. The plastic cases clicked against the cold metal. Her words had sounded funny, slightly distorted. Gary guessed she was gurning her mouth to apply mascara. "My family likes to hear the sound of their voice." "No shit." He brushed his teeth, then patted his short bangs and shook his head. "Not bad," he thought. He touched his earlobe again, feeling the lump around the tiny hole.

"What are you doing in here?" said Angie, walking through the bathroom door. She brushed the hair at her neck.

"Trying to decide if I can pass the hole off as a mole," he said.

"You're not going to wear your earring?" She stopped brushing.

"Ang, I'm meeting your family."

"Gary! I don't want you to try to impress them. Christ, I don't even care what they think."

"Well, I don't want them to think I'm a homo or anything."

"Gary, you're pissing me off now. They know we're getting married." She brushed her hand over the pile of jewelry on the bottom shelf of the medicine cabinet, leveling it. She picked out a small golden cross hanging from a thin wire. "Wear this."

Gary put the earring in his ear and pulled it. He raked his fingers through the hair behind his ear. It wasn't long enough. He tilted his head, raising one shoulder. He looked deformed, and could still see the glint of metal. He touched the earring.

"Gary," called Angie from the kitchen. "Keep the earring."

Mom, can't you get the radio station in any better?" asked Randy from the back seat. "I could listen to dentist office music. Anything but this static."

"You can't get radio stations up here," said Susan. "Too many hills." Randy ignored his mother, and pushed the arm rest down to lean between the bucket seats. He reached for the knob, his coat sleeve sliding halfway up his arm. Susan slapped his hand and turned the metal knob quickly to the left. "Now you don't have to worry about it," she said. The car's antennae slipped into the hood, the thinner segments sliding into the larger sheaths.

Randy pulled his jacket over his belt loops and slumped back. His legs were on either side of the carpeted hump on the floor. His knees touched the backs of the front seats.

"Soon there," said Susan. "I think this is the driveway." A metal chain stretched across the gutted road. The NO TRESSPASSING sign was rusty.

"Is this the place?"

"I don't know," said Susan. "I had thought so, but how could Lee have gotten in here with the gate still down?"

She unhooked the chain from the wooden post and got back in the car. "We'll find out soon." Red raspberry leaves flattened as the car drove up the driveway, their opposite sides a pale green.

"This is the place!" said Randy. "That's Uncle Lee's bulldozer." Susan leaned back until her neck touched the headrest, then pushed the tab that lowered her window.

"I see Lee's ponds are on the ten year plan," Susan said, looking at the mounds of dirt next to the driveway. The ground was covered with orange sawdust and clumps of wood chips. "I

thought he planned on having the springs opened by now. He doesn't even have the ground leveled yet." Randy nodded, looking out the window. The trees' shadows sped over his mother's arm. Randy pulled his cuffs over his hands and wiggled out of his jacket. The shell of the jacket felt cool.

The cabin's pale green corrugated tiles had tiny openings for square windows. An addition had been built on to the south side of the building. Its walls were wooden panels. Stacked cinder blocks formed steps to the building's addition. An old screen porch surrounded the green section of the cabin. Its metal screens were rusty.

"Angie's not here yet," said Susan. "I only see Grandmom's car." She let the car drift down the incline to where the driveway stopped, closed her window, and pushed the car door open.

"Hiya, sister-sweets!" Lee called from the barbecue. The thick roast sizzled and spat. Susan waved. Randy lifted the large box from the front seat and set it on the ground, then handed his mother the covered bowls of potato salad and jello from the floor of the passenger's side. She cradled them and walked to the center of the yard.

"How the hell did you rig that thing up?" she asked, gesturing toward the barbecue. She raised her left leg to reposition the bowls. The barbecue was an old oil drum split in half raised to waist level on four metal prongs. Susan leaned closer and saw silver blobs of metal connecting the legs to the drum.

"Like it?" Lee asked, puffing his cheeks with a wide grin. His lips were closed. The brown hair of his sideburns curled away from his face. Susan often thought her brother looked like a pleased chipmunk. "Well, I bought the actual grill," he said, motioning toward the meat. Susan nodded; the grill was the only metal not sprinkled with a reddish, grainy rust.

"Gary put the earring in his ear and pulled it. He raked his fingers through the hair behind his ear. It wasn't long enough. He tilted his head, raising one shoulder. He looked deformed, and could still see the glint of metal. He touched the earring."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

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# FACE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

"And the rest of it," he said, "I can only attribute to Feeber ingenuity."

Susan crouched next to the metal poles. "Are these the bottoms of road signs?" she asked, squinting up at him.

"Yup," he said, pushing the nosepiece of his glasses with his thumb. His steak prongs dangled straight from his hand. He had bent his head forward to keep the prongs from hitting him in the nose. "Actually, it was just one sign. I was efficient with my resources."

Susan straightened. "Well, no matter how it gets done, the meat smells good anyway. Shouldn't you be flipping that thing?"

"Meat gets tough when you flip it too often."

"Susan!" The screen door banged, bouncing off the doorjamb, and Kathryn stepped onto the flagstone square next to the cabin. She leaned forward against a low wall of stones, then rested her weight on her palms. She wore a striped polyester dress, tied at the waist with two pink cords, and white sandals with low heels. Susan heard the heels click as her mother walked on the uneven tiles. "Bring that

food through the new door. That way you won't have to climb over all the stuff on the porch."

"Mother's always after me to clean that damn porch," Lee muttered.

"Of course," Susan said. She smiled at her brother. Mother wants to show someone off, and you know I'm not much good in that capacity." She turned and followed the small circles of slate that led to the addition.

"Lee!"

"Yes mother?" He didn't look over his shoulder.

"Is that meat soon done?"

"Mom, Angie's not even here yet."

"No, but I told her twelve. I'll be ready to eat by noon!"

"It's only eleven!"

"Well, don't let it burn." She stepped backwards and the screen door banged shut. "I should fix that latch," Lee thought, then ground pepper on the steak from a wooden mill.

"Mother?" Susan called through the cabin. "Need any help?" She dropped the potato salad and jello on the picnic table in the addition. Kathryn walked through the old living room. "Doesn't the addition look great?" she asked, stepping down the three wooden steps that connected the original cabin to the new room.

An old Franklin stove stood in the corner of the room, turned at an angle on a square bed of bricks. The cabin's walls were paneled. The last time Susan had

visited the walls had been blonde two by eights, separated by stiff pink insulation. The room looked long and narrow, lit only by the uncurtained windows that lined the walls. The windows still had red and white Anderson stickers glued to the panes.

"I bought Lee the rug, and I gave him your Daddy's recliners. I knew he'd never buy any furniture for himself." Susan smiled; she knew the same thing.

"I thought we were going to eat outside. It's going to be beautiful."

"Well," said Kathryn, "Lee didn't have the time to get the yard ready. He's been so busy at work." Susan stared out the door's window and counted six broken lawn chairs, their stringy webbing unraveling; two picnic tables, and one muddy sun umbrella. The yard had been cluttered since Lee had bought the cabin and its eighty acres of woods. Susan saw him, standing next to the barbecue, hiking his jeans over his swollen stomach. Behind him, a blue Volkswagen bug puttered around the bend in the driveway. Lee waved. "Mom," Susan called, "Angie's here! Where's Randy?"

"Coming!" he yelled from the other side of the house. Susan heard long toenails slide across the linoleum floor of the kitchen. She looked down. "Hey Butchie," she said in a child's voice. "Where have you been hiding?" The fat Boston bull wagged his stubbed tail hard, his hind legs slipping out from underneath him.

"Angie's here?" Randy asked.

She walked in then, through the screen porch. "Hello? Where is everybody? God, Uncle Lee, you have a lot of shit out here." She stepped over a stack of empty soda cases and walked into the cabin. "Hey!" She raised her arms slightly and smiled.

Kathryn reached her first. "Hi-lo there," she said, kissing her granddaughter lightly on the cheek. "You look pretty today." Angie wore a sweatshirt and red shorts.

"Thanks Grandmom," Angie pulled away. "Happy birthday. I haven't seen you for so long."

She kissed her mother and wrinkled her nose at her brother. Randy stared past her. Angie turned to look over her shoulder. "Oh yeah. Everybody, this is Gary." He was tall, and bent his head a little as everyone looked at him. His hair was short at the temples; his face looked small. The small gold cross swung in his left ear as he nodded. "Gary, this is my grandmother, Kathryn Feeber; my mother Susan, and my brother Randy."

"Hi," Gary said. Kathryn chewed on the side of her mouth. The straight lines around her mouth darkened.

"Need any help, Grandmom? I'm sorry we didn't bring anything, but we really didn't have time."

"No problem, Angie. If Lee's soon done with the meat you can fill the water glasses."

"Okay. Gar, come to the kitchen with me?" They walked up the wooden steps and into the kitchen. Butchie followed them closely, sniffing the cuffs of Gary's jeans.

"Have you met this guy before?" asked Kathryn. She was sucking the side of her mouth again.

"No. She hasn't been home since they've met. She sure knows how to pick 'em though, doesn't she?" Susan shook her head.

"I like him," said Randy. "I think he's cool."

"Of course," Kathryn said, glancing at Randy quickly. "he seems very nice. Randy, can you see if your Uncle needs any help?"

"I can see him coming now," said Susan.

Randy held the door open. It seemed much hotter outside.

"Let's eat," said Lee, sliding the platter onto the picnic table. The meat slid in a puddle of thin blood. "Randy, can you get me the carving knife from the kitchen?"

"Sure."

Gary and Angie walked back into the addition. Angie carried a thick glass pitcher, her left hand underneath the lip. Gary held a blue plastic ice cube tray in each hand. He put two cubes in each glass and Angie filled them, spilling the water slightly. The paper tablecloth stuck to the table.

"Gary, do you eat your meat rare, medium, or burnt?" Lee moved his knife from the middle of the roast to the end as he asked. Gary nodded. "All right, a slice for the young man in blue," Lee said. "Very dead."

The paper napkins were see-through with grease. Lee pulled meal from the roast and dropped it next to his chair for Butchie. "Lee," said Kathryn, "at least put it on a plate or something. You're getting grease all over the carpet."

"No I'm not, mother. Butchie's licking it all up." The dog sniffed the meat, pushed it slightly underneath the table, then walked to a square of sunlight on the floor. He laid down, resting his square head on his folded forelegs.

"Thanks, dog," said Lee.

"I'm getting another soda," said Susan.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38

## Tongues of Prayer

(after a photograph depicting a baptism by Sylvia  
Johnson/Woodfin Camp and Associates)

Crease, fold, spider web arms of dark  
converge, the pulp of light escapes.  
The black-and-white loves confusion,  
a mumbling of shadows, but  
the bottom left focus shows  
the infant's a girl —you can tell  
by her gown's fine white lace decoration

Someone is holding her, tiny bride,  
precarious over his threshold.  
So quiet, eyes shut, her lips are a little ajar,  
Descending, then still, the wrinkled skin  
of the minister's hand. His thumb

is touching her forehead, palpable as stone, or a ghost.  
You can imagine the family, beaming over their ruptured virgin.  
Mary was raped this way, and the re-enactment is just as good.

Photography is fiction.  
Here the sun pounds out its  
imperceptible whisper. No solid  
hot globe, it's rather as if  
some God  
or careless child has poked a hole  
in this thin membrane of sky.

*by Geoff Camphire*

## Sad Water

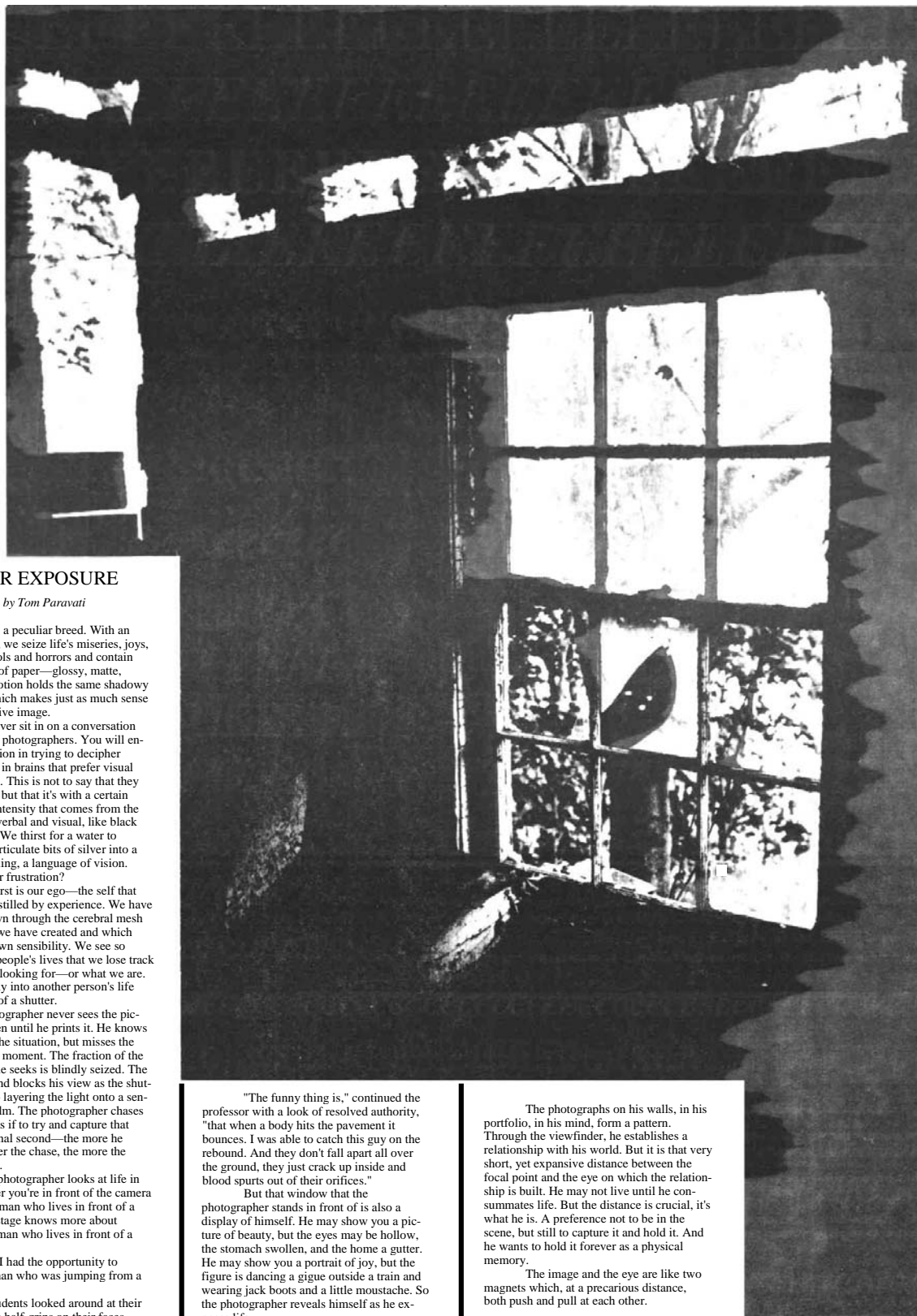
What we call evil, Kafka tells us, is only  
a necessary moment in our endless  
development. When I was very young, my bed  
had no headboard, so mattress and pillow  
rested against the wall. Whenever  
I wanted, late at night, I could stretch  
my arms over me and press my palms  
to the wall—flat,  
heavy and hard in all  
two dimensions of direction —  
at night that was father.

Years pass, like falling up a flight of stairs,  
until I was running in the rain with a girl  
who felt water's misery. My suit, her dress  
especially, wet. But the symphony,  
whirling horns and strings, fire  
squeezing light from this world,  
touched me with cathartic certainty, love,  
as orgasm and laughter can touch in the same way.  
She held my hand, had me forget

what I'd believed, the books  
I'd read. I imagined them rising into this  
lightless night as a Tower of Babel,  
breathless, deathless,  
stringless kite. And  
in the street after the concert,  
while we waited for the rain to end,  
thunder clapped loud. Glancing,  
I saw her  
purse her lips, as if to kiss it back.

In a fit of necessity, Kafka conceded to t.b.

*by Geoff Camphire*



## OVER EXPOSURE

by Tom Paravati

We are a peculiar breed. With an unfeeling hand, we seize life's miseries, joys, nuances, symbols and horrors and contain them in pieces of paper—glossy, matte, pearl. Each emotion holds the same shadowy significance which makes just as much sense to us in a negative image.

Don't ever sit in on a conversation with a group of photographers. You will encounter frustration in trying to decipher words nurtured in brains that prefer visual communication. This is not to say that they can't articulate, but that it's with a certain character and intensity that comes from the clash between verbal and visual, like black meeting white. We thirst for a water to develop the inarticulate bits of silver into a pattern of meaning, a language of vision. Can you see our frustration?

Our thirst is our ego—the self that has yet to be distilled by experience. We have yet to filter down through the cerebral mesh of images that we have created and which bandages our own sensibility. We see so much of other people's lives that we lose track of what we are looking for—or what we are. We jump blindly into another person's life with the speed of a shutter.

A photographer never sees the picture he has taken until he prints it. He knows the context of the situation, but misses the most important moment. The fraction of the second which he seeks is blindly seized. The mirror jumps and blocks his view as the shutter glides by — layering the light onto a sensitive skin of film. The photographer chases life with zeal, as if to try and capture that missing fractional second—the more he shoots, the faster the chase, the more the seconds add up.

Every photographer looks at life in two ways: either you're in front of the camera or behind it. A man who lives in front of a mirror or on a stage knows more about himself than a man who lives in front of a window.

"Once I had the opportunity to photograph a man who was jumping from a window."

The students looked around at their classmates with half-grins on their faces.

"The funny thing is," continued the professor with a look of resolved authority, "that when a body hits the pavement it bounces. I was able to catch this guy on the rebound. And they don't fall apart all over the ground, they just crack up inside and blood spurts out of their orifices."

But that window that the photographer stands in front of is also a display of himself. He may show you a picture of beauty, but the eyes may be hollow, the stomach swollen, and the home a gutter. He may show you a portrait of joy, but the figure is dancing a jig outside a train and wearing jack boots and a little moustache. So the photographer reveals himself as he exposes life.

The photographs on his walls, in his portfolio, in his mind, form a pattern. Through the viewfinder, he establishes a relationship with his world. But it is that very short, yet expansive distance between the focal point and the eye on which the relationship is built. He may not live until he consummates life. But the distance is crucial, it's what he is. A preference not to be in the scene, but still to capture it and hold it. And he wants to hold it forever as a physical memory.

The image and the eye are like two magnets which, at a precarious distance, both push and pull at each other.





PHOTOGRAPH BY TOM PARAVATI



## Three Poems On the Ideas of Agriculture

1

Who farms these hills  
feels harm  
in the rills where  
hills meet.

Just under the land  
at its low points  
you line up clay pipe  
maybe for miles  
to cry water away.

Dirt does not drink  
fast enough  
so you  
deny it.

This is science.

2

Try to face  
the pig factory  
without tears  
without jeers.

Each room  
is a sociology  
text:

childhood  
adolescence  
maturity.

There is  
no room  
for reluctance

or going back.  
The last room  
is a truck

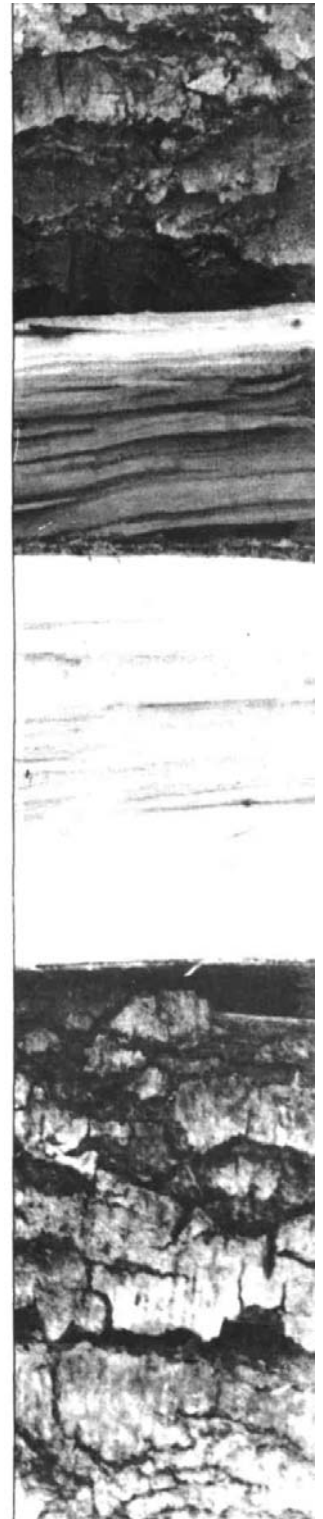
taking them  
away from  
what happened

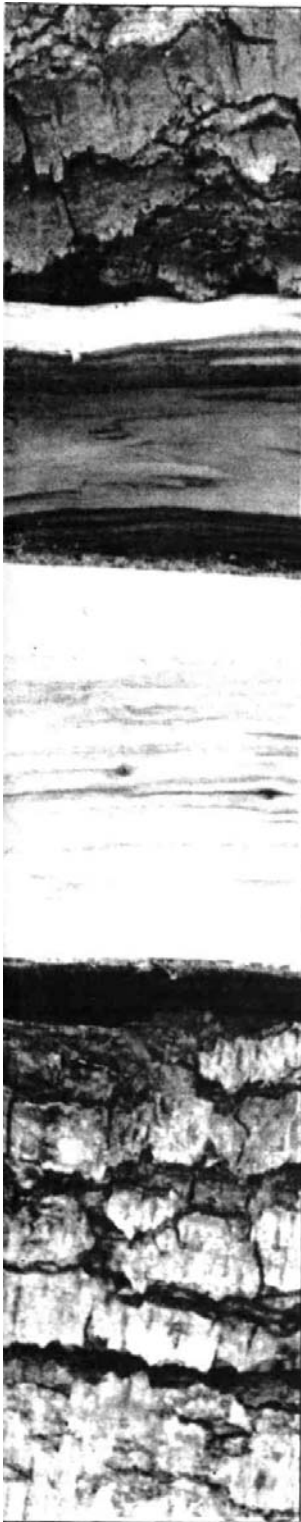
before they  
died, taking  
them to us.

3

If cutting the land  
isn't cruel  
then the dust  
that blinds us  
is a criminal  
we can't trust.  
Dirt that did not run  
waits its turn.

*by Daniel McGuiness*





## Political Significance

Clouds' valleys lead  
to light.  
Civilizations falling down  
and, falling down,  
heads roll  
while subscriptions I thought  
had expired  
keep bringing  
my magazines  
on time.

Odd hours  
I buy shirts new  
and socks in basic black:  
I haven't come that far  
from violence.  
I don't steal  
because the rich are  
all around  
and round about them  
the hungry stumble  
like dancers  
who could turn bacchanal  
from accumulated  
grief.

Poems that lack  
political significance  
work better  
but my knees  
are still there  
porcelain smooth  
as doughnuts  
under icing.  
Acid sits  
in the back of my throat.  
I'll spit fire  
at the end.

I'll take the time  
later to gild and  
burnish with  
the agate tip  
of expense.  
Meanwhile we'll sit  
like virus  
on the body's health  
discussing fraternity  
and the world's goods

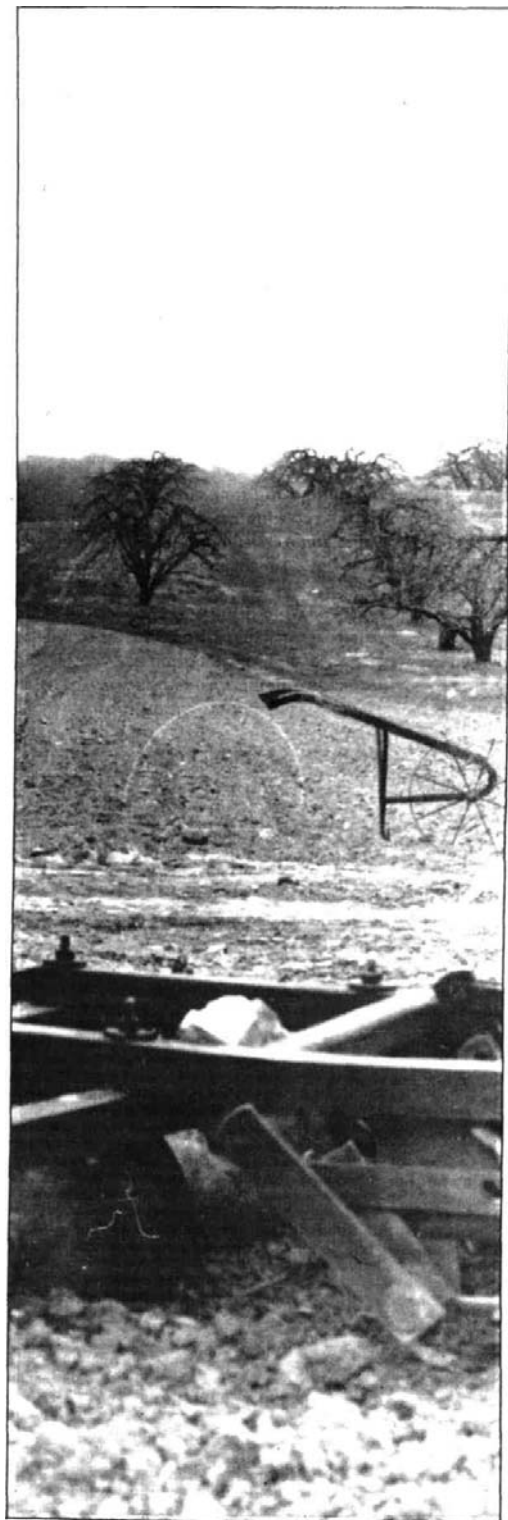
and how pale  
and oddly veined  
the skin at our temples  
turns in light  
like this.

Outside the clouds  
pile up like rocks  
around the mouth  
of a cave  
that will serve  
as a grave  
when the time comes  
for all our bones  
and all our littered dead.

What can happen  
to our poor souls  
between sleep  
and versions of commerce  
that make war  
astringent  
in the general air?  
This is a version  
of martyrdom.  
Buy it.

Make the moon  
a centaur for escape:  
haunch, leg, and hard hoof  
cracking the leaves  
in the first leap.  
These are also lies,  
fair lady,  
like the clouds  
like the ranked poor  
like the articles  
we've gathered  
out of fashion.

*by Daniel McGuiness*



## Curls

from Rembrandt's "The Entombment of Christ"

A darkened servant folds the blanket, cocooning the  
limp body in its warmth, its heat. Christ curls like a sleepy child  
carried gently to bed. His face is white, his stiff legs  
bent. It is Christ's hair

splashing from his scalp to his shoulders, long  
twisted funnels like the hair of a baby  
going to a party.

My granny's mother had a golden picture  
of Christ  
smiling gently, his hands  
palms flat  
open wide. It hung above a table in her shanty.

She died in a rocker, her lap so stiff  
they tied her down in a coffin. Thick twisted ropes  
tied around her armpits and  
her ankles. Her hair was long and curly and arranged  
to hide the ropes. The reverend

took a scissors, cutting each perfect curl, he cut it  
shoulder length and put it in a box. Seven children. Seven boxes.

Granny got her mother's house. Christ shines  
from his place between the windows. Dark eyes staring  
straight ahead. Fingertips pointed down. Taped in a corner  
of the frame  
is a yellow palm branch, its dry flatness  
splitting into strings. In the other corner is a  
long and heavy curl  
stiff dull coarse.

by Sandy Moser



## Dutch Roses

When we left the Red Lion Inn  
we walked home through back yards. *You American girls  
love roses.* You had told me  
when we met that Friday meant real cigarettes and  
you'd buy the drinks. While we waited

for Friday we sprinkled brittle tobacco on  
white squares, smoothing them on the Inn's round tables,  
sliding the squares, a thin line of leaves down  
the middle, till they curled,  
the tobacco tight.

You licked the paper, tore the end.  
You said you could love my country, but my

CIA killed Marilyn Monroe. You'd never forgive me  
for that. Our cigarettes were thin and wrinkled and  
I couldn't inhale. I tried  
to hold the smoke in my mouth.  
When the waitress looked at our empty table,  
she asked again for an order. You yelled in Dutch.  
We left, not pushing in our chairs and you said

you knew a shortcut. We were in front of someone's  
rosebush. *We don't have thorns  
in Amsterdam,* you told me. *God made the universe,*

*the Dutch made Holland.* But your roses  
were too thick, you bent them back  
forth, to the points on a compass  
faster, getting angry, not giving up,  
apologizing,

turning them in circles til the stems  
were mashed and stringy.  
When I kissed your fingers later  
they smelled sharp, slightly damp.  
*I'm sorry about the flowers,* you whispered  
I'll buy you real ones this weekend.

I hld your fingers to my mouth,  
your thumb resting on my chin. I could smell  
the pulpy rosetems that weekend  
when I took two inches of a stem, hiding it  
in my pocket, knowing that the officers in customs would  
throw our flowers in the trash. I left  
your roses on the bus in the middle  
of the plaid seat.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM LOSCALZO

# Light

A SHORT STORY BY MIMI TEAHAN



**When** Adam was fourteen, he saw a boy die. "His name was Martin," he says as he rolls away from me and turns his face full up to the ceiling like he always does when he's telling a story. "He lived down the block from me, but I didn't really know him. I used to see him all the time walking back from school and I'd think, 'I should run up and talk to him, say hello.' I should, I thought...but, I just couldn't bring myself to do it."



# Adam stops speaking and I hear my heart beating hot inside my head, feel the flush of his body next to mine and the river of fire that burns its way up my legs.

He stares straight up and his eyes are wide, constant, watching these pictures from his past as they are resurrected above us.

"He was weird, you know? Real far away...sort of like Blaze is..."

Blaze comes to me for counseling once a week. The faculty is split on whether he's black, white, or Indian."

"I'm a little of everything, man," Blaze says. "Heinz 57 mix."

Last year he spray painted a nude mural of a butterfly queen on the outside wall of the art room. Right now, he's building a gallows so that he can be the hanging man for Halloween. He is really named Blais, the saint who guards our throats. But, he signs his creations "Blaze," with an accent over the "a."

"Yeah," Adam says...Blaze." He stops and his eyes narrow as he merges the name and face together in his head. "He was kind of like that, always hanging off the edges... always ready to fall..." He doesn't look at me, but takes my hand, massaging my palm with his thumb.

I close my eyes, falling softly into the cloud of pillow behind me.

"It was the last time that the locusts were here...God, remember that?" His voice grows heavy, his words waxey, far away, and I picture when the air was thick with bugs, dying on our windshields, clogging up the gutters...

"It was the end of May, and school was almost out. I was late walking home because I had Softball practice. The sky was bright and pink..."

"I walked past Martin's house, and he was out there on the front porch...sitting there, like he'd been waiting for me, expecting me. He called out my name..."

"So I walked over to where he was...the walk to his house was all cracked and gravelly... He was standing in front of this big metal thing that looked like an old wash tub. There was a screen over top of it that he was holding down with one hand.

"Something kept thudding against the screen, trying to get out...I didn't walk up the porch the whole way. I was a lot bigger than he was, but he still scared me."

I can feel the moist heat of his hand as he tightens his grasp.

"Martin smiled as he reached up behind him, keeping the one hand still holding down the screen. He pulled out a gasoline can—brand new, looking like he'd just bought it. It was uncapped, and he poured it over the screen, splashing some of it onto his jeans.

"The things that were in the washtub started thudding like crazy when they felt the gasoline hit them. I stepped back a few

feet, and Martin started laughing..."

"Then he stood up real fast and pulled the screen off the top of the washtub. He tilted the tub toward me with his foot, so I could see what was inside.

"Locusts... piles of them, piled up nearly to the top of the washtub. He must have spent days collecting them, there were so many. They were hungry, and scared, and pissed...When I looked at them, I thought I was going to throw up.

"But Martin didn't give me the chance. He reached into his pockets and pulled out a red Bic lighter. He lifted the lighter above his head, and threw it into the washtub of bugs.

"They lit up instantly, and for a moment it was beautiful. There were these seizures of light exploding into little bombs of fire.

"But, it was only small and pretty for a minute. In the next second, the whole tub exploded like a volcano... the fire shot into Martin's face... onto his shoulders and clothes..."

"And he fell forward in a scream that seemed to travel all the way down the block and back again before it hit me in the ear...He fell forward onto the burning locusts...spilling them and his body down the porch stairs in a river of flames..."

Adam stops speaking and I hear my heart beating hot inside my head, feel the flush of body next to mine and the river of fire that burns its way up my legs.

He shifts and turns on me, so I feel his intense weight, his blond hair grey in the darkness. And I feel myself dying slowly under him.

I work with "problem cases" in a high school of nine hundred students. Most of them drop out before they reach their junior year. Blaze is the only senior I have right now, and he'll probably be the only senior next year, too. He's working through on the six year plan, he tells me.

The school board hired me last year after a girl named Lisanne freaked out in an advanced Biology course and killed a dozen goldfish by poking their eyes out with a sharp lead pencil. Mine is the only room in the school that has carpeting.

Adam teaches art. He says he's painted dozens of pictures of me, but he throws them away or burns them because they are never quite right.

I met Adam last Spring, after the nude mural appeared. The orange and red woman with her blue hair and enormous breasts proved to be too much for the faculty, especially Mrs. Eddy, who claimed it had been modeled after her. Adam declared it a masterpiece, but Sam the janitor erased her forever with a coat of beige paint and Blaze started going to see me once a week.

Adam moved in with me last summer, hanging bright Matisse prints that glow like fire on the walls. I think Mrs. Eddy has figured out that we're roommates, but so far the only person in the school who knows officially is Blaze.

Blaze isn't confused, I tell Adam. He's just nuts. Blaze lies to everyone, including himself. But—except for Adam—Blaze is the only person in the school that I trust.

Blaze's people are coal mining, like mine. Adam doesn't understand this, and when Blaze tries to hand in a canvas painted completely black and titled "Down the Shaft," Adam says he's just being lazy.

So, I tell Adam horror stories of my grandfather who worked thirty-five straight years digging coal out of the West Virginia earth.

Martinka mines would sometimes have visiting days, and Papap would take me down, putting a yellow hard hat on my head and a heavy yellow jacket over my shoulders. We would board a strange metal elevator and drop down to the center of the earth with the other coal mining children, stringy-haired and hollow-eyed. It was dirty and pitch black and I always thought that the devil lived down that shaft safe and secure forever and that he would take me prisoner unless I held on tight to Papap's hand and prayed to my guardian angel.

Papap worked in that darkness, nine hours a day, thirty-five straight years. The mining people used to let the miners eat down there, smoke down there, no masks, no gloves, nothing to block them from the dead world that they were tearing apart except for the yellow canaries, neon against the shadow, dropping if the gases got too strong.

Papap got black lung sucking in too much asbestos. He would throw up after every meal. I saw him once, when the sickness came quick, with no time to close the door to the bathroom. Black fluid gushed forth from his mouth in a continuous stream, as if in a few minutes his body tried to purge itself of over three decades of tearing away at the earth.

When I tell Adam this story, he just stares at me. I don't tell him that when he moves into me, filling me with light, I think he is pushing me out of my body, and I lose myself completely.

My father used to play hide-and-seek with me every night when he came home from work. I would hear the heavy sound of his footsteps, and run and hide under beds, or behind the sofa.

Once, though, I hid in my mother's sweater chest that smelt heavily of Chanel Number Five. I passed out waiting for him to find me. My parents thought I was dead when they finally pulled me out the

next morning. I screamed because the light was so bright and ran into the closet.

Even now, I have only one lamp in each room of my apartment and a single light bulb screwed into the ceiling of the foyer. Black shades cover my windows, and I keep them drawn in all weathers.

I work in the basement of the school. It has grey walls with only one window. I asked for it, and was almost refused for the simple reason that nobody ever wants that room. The only thing it has ever been used for before is to store band instruments in summertime.

"Witchey women," Adam sings to me, as we walk down the hall together to the faculty lounge. Two girls with big blond hair whisper at each other when they see us. "She's got the moon in her eye-eyes."

"Blaze brought in the wood for the gallows today," Adam says, as we sneak black coffee and stale cinnamon rolls out of the home economics refrigerator. "He's trying to get me to okay it as a first semester project. He's really excited about it." Adam shuts the outside door where the words FACULTY LOUNGE are scribbled in red magic marker. The students always ignore it, though. They still sneak in here and use the Coke machine.

"I don't know, Adam," I say, stripping the icing from one of the rolls. "What is it he wants to do?"

Adam tilts his metal folding chair up against one of the walls. I hate when he does this, and I'm always afraid of the noise that he'll make if he falls.

"You know that haunted house they're doing in the gym? What is it for...UNICEF or something?"

"MuscularDystrophy" I say. "Mrs. Eddy in Biology told me they've had it every year for as far back as she can remember. She urged me to get my kids involved, said it would be good for them to do something for others, for a change."

"Whatever...Anyway, Blaze thinks that he can build a gallows on the backboard of one of the basketball hoops. He says he can attach a piece of wood to the ceiling, hang from it, and balance his weight on the backboard." Adam tilts his chair back down. "He says you thought it was a great idea."

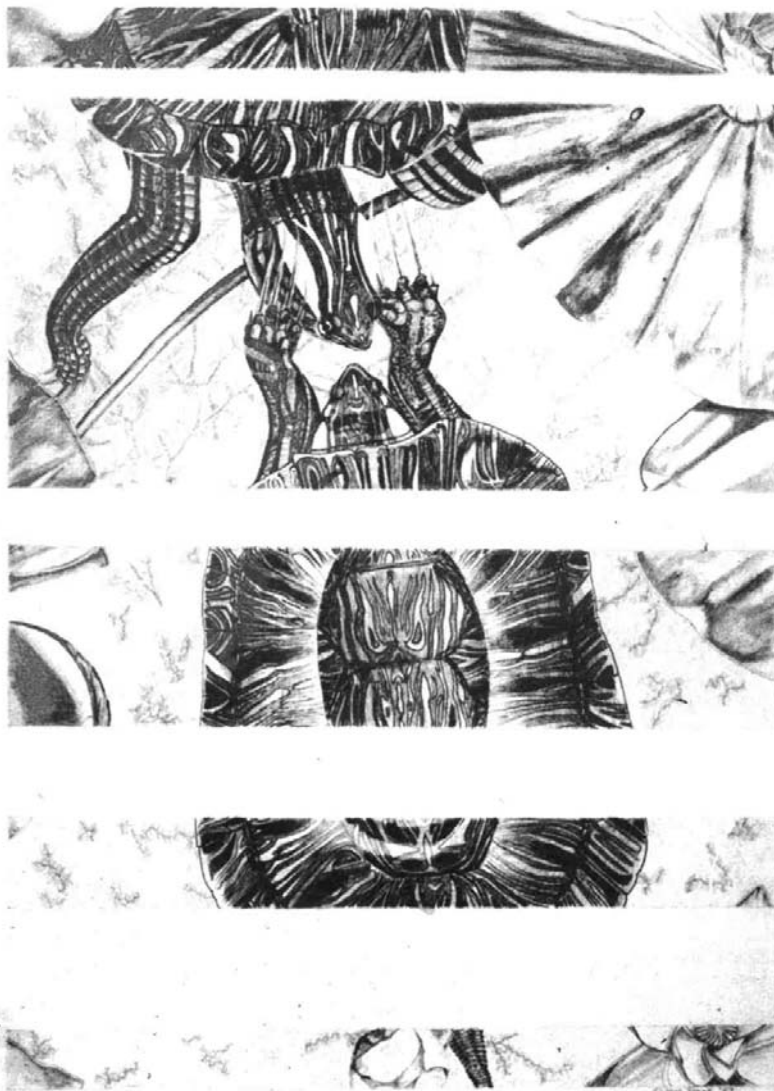
I never said this. Adam knows I didn't. Both of us agree that Blaze's favorite art is lying.

I pop a piece of cinnamon roll in my mouth. "Too much baking soda," I say. Adam smiles. He is waiting for my answer. If I tell him it's a bad idea - that it may threaten Blaze's emotional stability or destroy the progress that we've made -

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PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN BENZING



DRAWING BY DEBBIE FRANK

# Chalk and Ghost



A SHORT STORY BY TOM PARAVATI

# It was mid-August in Washington and the smog and humidity held the pocket of land like a hand smother- ing a scream when Kenneth Devlin stepped off the bus and walked into a chalk outline of a body on the street.

It was mid-August in Washington and the smog and humidity held the pocket of land like a hand smothering a scream when Kenneth Devlin stepped off the bus and walked into a chalk outline of a body on the street.

He was heading for his new home in Adams-Morgan. Maybe it was the purging heat, the soaking humidity or the ex-

haust from the rush-hour traffic which filled his lungs, stung his nostrils, and clouded his mind, but he felt clairvoyant. That was the only way to describe it. He felt as if he could see through walls and through people. He felt good enough to maybe even save a life.

His slender six-foot frame, clad in beige, gauze shirt and white cotton pants

stood tall at the bus stop. His head was tilted back a little, displaying a Roman nose that probed the air with dignity. His Raybans caught the bright noon-day sun over head. In summer-time, his auburn hair seemed to catch fire under the relentless rays of yellow light.

Holding a set of luggage in his arms, he had just finished kissing off the past twenty-one years of manicured turmoil that were punctuated by his mother's bottles of Beefeater's and by morning robes that had no respect for the time of day. He had little concern for his father's unassuming posture which hid behind *The Washington Post*. His father preferred to flee the domestic responsibilities of child-rearing. He was a silent and feeble emotional crutch for a wife whose only demands from her loving spouse were the keys to the car and the liquor cabinet. Kenneth figured that by leaving, he liberated his mother from the inert, maternal instincts that were kept caged in a desiccated, oak playpen in the attic which haunted the family like the ghost of a still-born child. A cloud of exhaust from the departing bus ushered him away from the stop.

Ken looked up at 604 Park West. It was a three story brick town house. He noticed Eric's red MG on the street with a bumper sticker that read "Capital punishment is spending the summer in D.C." He keyed into the front door and looked at the mailbox: "604 C Eric Strasser and Kenneth Devlin." Ken smiled and followed the thread-bare path upstairs. His bags made him rock back and forth going up the narrow stairwell. Each brush against the wall knocked some peeling paint onto the floor. He stood in the doorway and looked into the apartment. He was impressed. A decisive "Hmph" floated from his lips as he took in the decor. Obviously Eric was making a good living at the Comedy Shop and other gigs around the metro area. The living room looked out onto the streets through a pair of French doors leading out to a balcony that was filled with ficus and umbrella trees. The floor was black and white checkered tile with plush throw rugs scattered about. A white linen sectional couch occupied half of one wall and a corner on the far side of the room. A marbled fireplace which seemed to still be in use was next to it on the same wall. A large chintz couch with a black, gold, purple, and green floral pattern was against the entrance side of the room. Porcelain masks of Comedy and Tragedy hung above the sofa. A large brass, glass-topped coffee table was in the middle of the room and pillows of many shapes and sizes were thrown everywhere. He noticed there were no lights. He flicked a light switch next to the door and the full perimeter of the ceiling lit up. He remembered Eric saying how much he loved indirect lighting.

Blue walls with rose-trimmed woodwork pulled the room together with the dining area. There was only one other piece of lighting—a blue neon sculpture of a man in tails and top hat. The eyes were wide open and the mouth a circle. He looked like he had just seen a flasher.

He walked down the hallway which was carpeted with a long Persian rug runner. Laughter was coming from behind one of the doors. He opened the first door on the right and found a closet. He proceeded and opened the next door.

"Geez, sorry, Eric," he said as he started to back out of the bedroom.

"No, no—come back in," he said as he put a can of Hershey's Chocolate syrup next to a jar of honey on the nightstand. "Janey and I were just about to have a little lunch."

A blond-headed girl started to laugh

next to Eric on the bed wearing nothing more than a gaudy shade of blue eyeshadow. "A little lunch." Oh Eric, you slay me."

He pulled her bare body close to his and kissed her on the temple and said, "Not as often as I'd like to."

She started to laugh again. Ken could smell the sweet, ashy fragrance of pot. He looked at the nightstand and saw a saucer-like ashtray with a roachclip in it.

"Well, don't just stand there, come in, sit down. Let me make the introductions."

Ken returned, "Well, don't get up on my account."

"Believe me, I wouldn't get up on your account. It would be because of Janey, here," he said with a Cheshire smile. Jane started to laugh again, "Get up," oh Eric."

Eric looked at Ken while Janey was yucking it up. He rolled his eyes like Groucho Marx and flicked an imaginary cigar. Ken smiled.

"Have a seat, Kenny old boy," he said as he patted a space on the bed between himself and Jane. He sat down obligingly.

"Kenny here is D.C.'s most promising young writer."

Ken averted his eyes to the floor and was about to mumble some obligatory negative in defense of his modesty. Eric cut him off before he could proceed.

"And Ken, this is Jane Marshall. She saw my act last night—at the Shop, that is. More laughter erupted from the blond. She came backstage and asked me if I had any good lines to pick up girls. So we sat down and cut some coke."

"Yeah," she interrupted, "I said that was the best line I'd ever seen to pick up girls. Then after we talked for a little bit, he started to dance for me."

"Eric danced for you?"

Eric tossed his head back in laughter. "Yeah, he danced his chest for me."

Come on Eric, dance for me." She cajoled him a little and traced his squared pectorals with her finger to get him to go along with the show. Eric didn't need much prodding. "Doesn't he have a gorgeous bod?"

"Janey, I don't think Ken is too interested in hearing about my body."

Ken looked at them with a grin, "Yeah, you're right." Ken laughed. Then he stopped and looked down at Eric's chest which was starting to shake. The two large muscles that supported his wide shoulders started to jump and then they alternated in rhythm.

"You wanna see them do the drum solo in *Baracuda*?" he asked. They pounded out the rapid and irregular drum beat as Janey sang the lyrics which were jumbled with her laughter.

"Gee, that's really amazing, Eric. There could be a career in that for you," he said sarcastically.

"Yeah, maybe I'll incorporate it into my act at the shop. I'm sure a lot of women would pay to see some tall, Aryan god flex in front of them. Hey, maybe I should become a dancer for Chippendales."

Jane and Eric were both laughing as Ken's eyes filled with their blond hair flashing in the sunlight which was coming through the window behind them. He felt very warm, very happy—almost numb.

His eyes were starting to blur from the hazy, blue air that was being expelled from the crowd—recirculating clouds of cigarette smoke that perused the room like a subtle desire.

"What's the matter?"

"Just the smoke."

"Your eyes are tearing. Do you want some Visine?"

"No, I'm fine."

A roar of laughter swept through the crowd as his girlfriend's attention shifted

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# FACE

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"Anybody else want one?" Lee nodded.  
"Grandmom," said Randy. "When are you going to open your birthday present?"  
"I suppose I could do it right now."  
"Then let's move away from the table," said Lee. "I can't sit here comfortably when I see recliners in the same room."  
"Whatever did you get me?" asked Kathryn, tipping the box. "I won't break it, will I?"

"Don't try to guess, Mom," said Susan, handing a can to Lee. "Just open it. And don't save the paper, either. I don't want it."

Kathryn tore the paper and lifted the box out of it. "HOME SECURITY CENTER," she read. "Oh, thank you."  
"Do you know what it is, Mother?" chuckled Lee.

"Well, I just read it, didn't I? I'm older, Lee Feeber, but don't you assume I'm getting senile."

"Lee can install it for you, mother," interrupted Susan. "It's a burglar alarm."

"This way, when Uncle Lee stays out late, you're still safe. And you won't be scared when he has overnight trips," said Randy.

"You're right, Randy. When your Daddy lived, I never used..."  
"You mean Grandpop?"

"Oh, your grandmother is getting old. And I just told Lee I wasn't getting senile. What I meant was, I never got nervous when Paul lived, but now that I'm alone in the house I worry. It's just that it's not safe anymore."

Susan sat on the arm of Lee's green recliner. He lowered the foot rest so she could balance herself. "Lee, how are Mom's nerves? She hasn't been taking medicine, has she?"

"No, the doctor said she's had enough and won't extend her prescription. She asked me to call him yesterday."

"She shouldn't have the medicine. It confused her."

"I said she asked me to call. I didn't."

Kathryn was passing around the cards she had gotten for her birthday. "And here's one from Miriam."

"From Granny? In Florida?" Angie asked. Kathryn nodded. "How's she doing?"

"She's fine," said Kathryn. "I called her last week to tell her you were engaged."

"What did she say?" Angie laughed, then leaned toward Gary. "You're gonna love this. Granny's a piss!"

"I'll read you the letter. 'Dear Kathryn, blah, blah, blah...the first part is about the weather, and her neighbors, and the cats. Blah, blah, oh! Here it is. Tell Angie it's about time she found herself a husband—I thought I was going to have to find one for her. I had two kids by the time I was her age. Tell her I was worried we'd have a spinster on our hands.'"

"We were all worried," said Lee, wiping the back of his hand across his bald head.

"You should talk!" said Angie.

"Angie," said Kathryn, wrapping her package's ribbon around her second finger, "do you remember when you were a little girl you asked for a new grandmother, one without wrinkles, and a wife for Lee so you could get some cousins? Do you remember that?"

"No," said Angie.

"Neither of your wishes came true, kid-do. You'd better hope, this one turns out better." Lee nodded toward Gary.

"You've never been married?" asked Gary.

"Nope," said Lee, and took a drink

from his can. "Never made the mistake."

"C'mon Lee," said Susan, "you came close with that girl from Louisiana. I always thought that you should have been married to Kevin and I should have been the ones to call the wedding off. We both screwed up, Lee."

Lee was studying the frayed ends of his armchair. "We never called it off."  
"Hmmm?" Susan and Kathryn said it together.

"She died. She was in a car accident, coming to visit. We never called it off."

Susan stared at her soda can. "You never told us?" said Kathryn. "All this time...you never even told your mother?"  
"There was nothing you could do."

They were all quiet then. Kathryn stood up and began taking the dirty dishes into the kitchen. The dog barked. "Lee," said Randy quietly, "I think Butchie has to go out. Can I take him?" Lee nodded, his eyes on the shredded red mouse that Butchie like to chew and shake. It was in the middle of the floor.

"I think Gar and I could use a walk, too, after that big meal. Coming?" She pulled him off the recliner.

"Hey, Randy, where are you taking that dog?" yelled Angie once they were outside.

"I don't know," said Randy. "He doesn't have a leash. Wherever he wants to go, I guess." The three ran after the small dog.

When they came to a path in the woods, they slowed down. "We can't run in here," said Randy. "Too many trees."

"What about Butchie?" asked Gary.

"I don't know," said Randy. "I guess he knows his way well enough that he won't run off."

They walked slowly, careful not to bend any branches that would snap into the other two.

"God," said Angie. "We're so very far away from everything, aren't we?"

"Yeah, I'd never be able to find this place by myself," said Gary. "You know, Randy, you don't have to be afraid of me. Angie says you're a regular chatterbox normally."

"What do you think about us getting married, Randy?" asked Angie, leaning against Gary's chest.

"I think it's cool," said Randy, not turning around on the path. "I want to be an uncle."

Gary laughed.

"Ang," said Randy, stopping and pulling on a twig, "have you seen Dad lately?"

"Why?"

"Has he met Gary?" Randy looked nervous.

"Yeh," said Angie, tilting her eyebrows, "we went out there last week. Why?"

"Don't tell Mom."

"Why not? The divorce is over and I'm not anyone's custody problem."

"Please?" said Randy. "Say you came to her first. You've only been back for a week."

"All right," said Angie. "If she asks."

"It's getting dark," said Randy. "I'm turning around while I can still see the path." He raced ahead then, grabbing low branches as he ran, stripping the leaves. He called the dog.

"I like your brother," said Gary.

"I don't know. He's acting weird. He's very quiet."

"He wants everyone to be happy."

"What about everyone else? What do you think about them?"

"I think it's good I came along to save you before you started living in the past, too."

"My family does not live in the past! There's nothing wrong with their present!"

"They had you in the past; they miss that," She laughed then and kissed him. "You are the nicest tiling," she said. She stroked his ear.

"Your earring!"

"What?" said Gary.

"Your earring is gone!"

"Oh... it must have fallen out or something."

"Oh no," said Angie. "I just know it was fourteen carat. God, why couldn't I have told you to wear a cheap stud?" She blew out her breath and crossed her arms.

"It's in my pocket."

"Your earring?"

"Yeah. I took it off."

"When?"

"Right after the meal. I had a feeling your family didn't like it."

"I knew they wouldn't."

The woods were getting dark. Angie walked behind her boyfriend. "You know, for liking my family so much, you sure didn't say much this afternoon."

"That gives them less to dislike."

The cabin seemed warm when they got back. "It's starting to get chilly outside," said Angie, staring out the window. She saw the reflection of the living room: its bright lights and reclining chairs.

"It's getting dark, too," said Lee. "You know, it never gets dark at home. There's always lights reflecting from somewhere: Pottstown, or Boyertown, or Reading. But it gets dark up here. It gets so you can't see your hand in front of your face. Black."

"I think Gar and I want to be getting back," said Angie. "Gary has to work tomorrow." To Gary she said quietly, "I'll wash some dishes and then we'll be ready

**"Hey Mom!" Angie yelled. She squinted at the silhouettes in the yard. "Where's..."**  
**The lights went out and the woods were black. Inside the cabin, his hand still on the switch, Randy giggled as he heard his family trying to find each other in the dark.**

to go." Angie pushed her sweatshirt sleeves up to her elbows then ran up the steps to the kitchen.

"Congratulations again, you two," said Kathryn. "I'm sure I'll see you again soon."

"Of course, Grandmom," Angie said and kissed her goodbye. "Bye mom, I'll probably drop by tomorrow...Bye Lee, and thank you for the meal."

"Oooh! Don't leave yet!" yelled Kathryn, running to the kitchen. "Here," she said, handing Angie tight blue plastic boxes. "They'll taste just as good the second time around and we won't be able to eat it all if we eat for a week!" They stepped into the yard.

"It's beautiful out, isn't it?" asked Susan. A few stars dotted the sky. Gary looked up and saw a cloud of gnats bobbing around the dusk-to-dawn lamp on the corner of the porch. He blinked twice. "We'd better be getting home."

"Thank you everyone!" yelled Angie. "And happy birthday Grandmom!"

They were almost at the car when Gary whispered, "Where was Randy?"

"Hey Mom!" Angie yelled. She squinted at the silhouettes in the yard. "Where's..."

The lights went out and the woods were black. Inside the cabin, his hand still on the switch, Randy giggled as he heard his family trying to find each other in the dark.

END

The whole room turns,  
everyone moving to the basketball hoop.  
There, in the blue light,  
Blaze is hanging from the noose,  
his feet loose and kicking like they're on  
fire from the inside out. His hands  
are pressing into his neck, and I swallow,  
imagining the tightness of the braid of rope  
that is holding him there. Beneath his feet,  
the backboard and hoop are shattered.

## Light

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 33  
he'll cancel the project. The gallows won't be built unless I give the okay.

Across the table, Adam's face is stretched bright and open. "Okay," I say, swallowing the bitterness of the roll, and staring at the red and black paint spots on Adam's hand.

Sometimes at night, when the fog from the mountains is like wax on my windows, I wake with a start to the breaking sounds that Adam's body makes when he is asleep. I look at his eyeballs moving spastically inside their sockets, and I lose track of where and who I am. I remember what it was like to be a child lost in a shopping mall, dwarfed by the monster faces of strangers. The memory hits me with the force of steel hitting bone, and my heart gets the quick nervous beat that I feel when I drink too much coffee. I want to move away from him, and hide in the closet, pairing up shoes in the dark. Instead, I lay my face over his, sucking in the air that he exhales.

As usual, Blaze is late for his appointment. He struts in with two sweating cans of 7 - up and drops them down on my desk. He smiles.

"You're late, kiddo," I say, as he pops the top of one of them and hands it over to me.

"Had to get you something to drink, baby," he says, pressing the can against his forehead. "Man, it's thick out there, isn't it? Feels like August all over again."

He is wearing a Bill Idol T-shirt that is torn across the stomach, pulled tight over his caramel colored abdomen.

"What's new?" I ask, sipping the soda. "How's Deborah?" Last week, they were on the verge of splitting up.

"Same old thing, man. I tell her that it isn't going to cut if she stays on her virgin kick. She cries and runs her mascara, and I feel like shit. Same old thing, man," he says, shaking his head and leaning his back hard into the chair.

Last year, when he painted the mural, it took two months for me to hear him say what I'd known all along: that his father had been killed when the wall of a mine caved in. Now, we don't spend so much time getting through the muck.

"How's the big project going? Am I going to get a preview?"

Blaze rocks his chair back and forth.

"Your man is awesome, baby. Let me tell you that. He lets me work all during class," Blaze laughs, squeezing his eyes shut. "Everybody else got to look at pictures... Mah-tisse, Van-GO, Pi-ca-so, Pre-ca-so, oh...oh...oh..."

After school, when I walk past the art room, I hear Blaze and Adam singing Calypso songs, and the sound of hammers hitting wood. Tomorrow, they'll both complain about splinters of oak that sting under their fingernails. But, I know they won't wear gloves.

On Halloween, Adam leaves early to help Blaze set up his display. I put on a black dress, and a big floppy hat that my mother used to wear to funerals. The darkness of the hat casts violet shadows across my face.

The fluorescent lights of the gymnasium are shut off, and the expected buzz has been replaced by howls and shrieks blasting from the intercom system. Synthetic angel hair that was used to make clouds for last year's junior prom has been thinned down and turned into spider webs and threads of dust that hang from the walls and ceiling.

The place is pitch black, except for the red lights that are set up near the display booths. Draculas and werewolves offer Pepsi and candy apples to the shadows of bodies that weave themselves around the room. Couples migrate instinctively to the corners.

I feel a tug at the tip of my hat, and turning I find Adam wearing a black beard that hangs down to his waist. His eyebrows are arched high with black eye pencil.

"Hi," he shouts from underneath the beard. I feel the moist heat of his hand as he sets it on my shoulder.

"What are you?" I shout into his ear, as a loud cackle bursts from the intercom.

His painted eyebrows pop up to his hairline. "I don't know, yet," he shouts back. "How about the devil?" I smile and get a cold feeling in my gut. "Have you seen Blaze?" he asks, moving his leg against mine.

I shake my head, and he begins to lead me in and out of the thick braid of students who giggle as we work past them.

Someone opens one of the heavy outside doors, and the coolness of October washes over my breasts and brushes my skirt against my skin. I long for the sudden freedom I find in the pictures of starlight that I see from my bedroom window, when Adam is fast asleep.

I pull my hand away from him, pretending to bump into a ghost that passes me.

Adam stops sharply before one of the basketball hoops. There, above the hoop, is Blaze's body hanging from a rope attached to a wood plank in the ceiling. Blaze is balancing his feet on the backboard, and a blue light is hitting the drops of sweat that fall away from his face.

"Is he safe?" I ask Adam, whose eyes are set on Blaze's body that stands still and rigid.

"Safe as he's going to get," Adam answers.

The howls from the intercom system die away as "The Monster Mash" screams through the room.

A group of girls in front of us turn away from Blaze and jump in the air when they hear the music. "Mr. Summers, Mr. Summers, dance with us! C'mon!," one of them calls.

Adam takes my hand and starts to shake his shoulders.

"Go ahead," I say, pulling away. "I'm going to get a drink."

He winks at me and starts to Cha-Cha with a tall red haired girl.

I walk slowly, numbly through the crowd, my face full up to the ceiling. The werewolf wearing a red bow tie and pouring Pepsi into cups seems miles away from me. I consider walking out the door, into October and back to the rest of the world. Adam will keep dancing, and as long as he doesn't see me, I can slip through the crack of air and become invisible to him.

As I feel my body gravitating to the

door, there is a sharp cracking sound that breaks through the music. I feel the warm rush of the room as it folds away from me, and a scream makes echoes in the darkness. The whole room turns, everyone moving to the basketball hoop. There, in the blue light, Blaze is hanging from the noose, his feet loose and kicking like they're on fire from the inside out. His hands are pressing into his neck, and I swallow, imagining the tightness of the braid of rope that is holding him there. Beneath his feet, the backboard and hoop are shattered.

A boy with glasses climbs on another's shoulders and tries to reach up and steady the feet that twist and shake. But, Blaze kicks them both down and they fall in a thud to the floor.

Mrs. Eddy grabs my arm. "Get a ladder! Get a ladder! Holy Mary, that poor boy!"

Blaze's jaw drops down in a scream of silence that chills me, and I realize how helpless we are.

"Back up, back up!" Mrs. Eddy screams, and the students form a half circle around Blaze. Adam breaks through them, followed by the wrestling coach who carries a red white tumbling mat, and the principal, Mr. Tennant, with a ladder under his arm.

Adam rips the black beard off his face and throws it down to the floor.

Mr. Tennant and the wrestling coach unroll the mat so that it is centered under Blaze's body, which continues to fight in spasms.

Adam moves the ladder near Blaze. A warm silence fall across the room, as Adam starts to climb toward the ceiling.

"Amen," Mrs. Eddy says in a loud whisper.

Someone switches the fluorescents back on and light floods through the room. I turn my eyes down to the floor, waiting for the inevitable snap of cut rope, and the sighs of relief that will come when Blaze falls kicking onto the mat below him. The semi-circle will rush to his side. I will stand silent, waiting for the savior to descend upon me, curling me into him like the fingers of a fist.

END



# Chalk and Ghost

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 37

from Ken back to the stage. Ken focused his bleary eyes on the tall, blond figure on stage whose shoulder-length hair outlined his German features. Ken thought Eric looked like Leni Reiffenstahl's fantasy man.

"Eric's funny," she said without taking her eyes off the stage.

"That's why they pay him so much to stay here, Gen."

Well, I know, I'm just saying that as handsome as he is, he looks like he belongs on the cover of *GQ* instead of pitching one-liners in a night club.

"So you noticed," he said casually.

"Well how can you not?"

"That's part of his gimmick."

"Gimmick?" she said quizzically.

"Yeah, gimmick. Do you want another gin and tonic?"

"Another gin for Gen? Sure. Why not?"

A small giggle slipped through her lips. She adjusted the shoulder straps on her blue, silk dress that she bought at Neiman-Marcus for the evening.

"Why do you say it's a gimmick?" she asked after regaining her composure.

"Did you ever see a comedian that good-looking?"

"No, now that you mention it."

"Listen to his delivery. It's very smooth. It's light, yet serious—as if he's picking up a girl. Eric doesn't tell jokes to an audience, he flirts with them, Gen."

The fragrance from Gen's perfume caught his attention. It was gently mixing with the smoke and it smelled of roses. Ken was shredding a cocktail napkin and men started to twist a sip stick when the napkin gave out. He thought of his mother's rose garden behind their house. He remembered pricking his thumb on a thorn when he was ten. He had tried to pick one of the leafy bundles of soft, pink petals to hold against his cheek.

Gen looked at her boyfriend. She stared at the intensity that was always hiding behind the large, bronze colored eyes that seemed to be saying "Come in, but be careful."

"Well, you could say any performer..."

"You've made a mistake, Genevieve. He's not a performer. He doesn't perform for anyone except himself. The audience performs for him."

"Well why does he work on stage? He could make just as much money, probably more, if he modeled."

"He'd miss being fed the applause, the laughter, the ardent admirers who slip into his dressing room after the last bow, the endless line of mindless bimbos taking a ticket to the one man show."

Another burst of laughter swept through the audience. Heads bobbed and swayed to and fro. Shoulders jostled up and down, hands slapped backs and glasses of liquor were raised to mouths in an unconscious salute to the man on stage. Eric just casually stood in front of the crowd with a drink in his hand which was a kind of trademark for him along with the white, Palm Beach suit. Tonight he was wearing a deep, sky blue shirt which brought out the color in his eyes.

Both returned their attention to the stage where Eric was delivering his monologue. "The Comedy Shop" was written in red neon on a brick wall behind him.

"Love is a lot like money in this country." A few people clapped their hands and shouted in affirmation of the comic's ideology. "Yeah, that's right. If you have a lot of money, you have a lot of—love." He exaggerated the word "love" with a deep, guttural inflection through curved lips that looked like an Elvis Presley sneer. It raised a few chuckles from the crowd.

"You see, the women in this economic picture are at the lower end of the bargaining table. Which means they have to make the man—pay the price." Some of the men in the audience laughed while a few boo's were issued from the women. Eric responded by raising one eyebrow and then ignoring them.

"When I entertain, or what I call, 'Enter-Tame,' a girl," a few cheers came from some of the younger males in the audience, "I am usually quite fair in 'expensing my funds.' Of course I'll inspect the merchandise quite carefully before I show interest in purchasing the product. Now, while all this calculating is going on in the male's head, the woman usually has no idea that there is an attempted take-over in the works."

"The woman thinks she's protecting her virtue and reputation by romanticizing

By the end of his monologue, he had taken his jacket and tie off accompanied by yells for "More" from the women in the audience.

"Hey, ladies" he'd say, "If you want more, I'll be dancing with Chippendales later this month."

Gen was thinking out loud, "He's so funny."

"That's the second time you've said that."

"Well, he is."

Do you want to go backstage after the show?"

"Yeah, sure."

Ken looked at his girlfriend of five years that he met at Georgetown U. They both had the same interests, but different majors. With her, he was able to find the abandon of childhood that orphaned him in his youth. In his eyes, the green of her years was being colored red and blue by the light of the club's hazy interior. He watched her laughing at his roommate on stage. Eric pulled her into his world with sarcasm, cynicism, and humor—something Ken wasn't ever able to do with his writing. He wanted to show her that there was feeling and anger in him too. "She feels special—knowing the

"It's just that it's been so lonely."

Eric walked into the living room in a black silk robe rubbing his eyes with thumb and forefinger and then massaged them just beneath the eyebrows. He had a mug of coffee in his other hand. He sat down on the couch, put both legs up and let his head fall back with a faint groan. Ken quickly looked up at him and then back down to the receiver. He lowered his voice some and continued, "I was wondering if I could borrow some money from you and dad for just a couple of weeks. Tips haven't been too good and I haven't sold much writing lately."

I told you that finding a good job would be difficult, didn't I? You have to go back to school if you want a career in writing. You at least need something—to fall back on.

She was having a difficult time getting the words out in between nursing her glass and fighting off an upset stomach. Ken heard his father's voice in the background and his mother said, "It's Kenny, he needs money."

Ken let out a heavy sigh. He heard his father's voice ask "How much?"

"Tell dad a couple of hundred dollars should do it."

Before she could say anything else, she heard the receiver go dead. She stared at it for a minute then let it fall to her breast. She raised her glass a little and emptied the contents, then put the receiver back on the phone.

and playing the courtly game whereas the man is only interested in getting a high yield when he spends his 'cold, hard, cash.' Yelps and applause were offered by most of the men in a macho display of praise.

"There was one girl in particular I knew some time ago. She was a real CEO of the board-room, if you know what I mean. I knew that I was going to have to work hard for my money. Don't you just hate that?" A few more cat-calls were thrown from the crowd. "When the situation escalates, the guy has to think of crazy stuff to delay the final transferral of funds. There's a stiff penalty for early withdrawal. I let my mind wander through various avenues of distraction. I'll usually think of the 'Peace Pageant' during Christmas time down on the ellipse or if I really need to concentrate, I'll recite poetic meter in my head. Iambic: short, long; Trochaic: long, short..." The audience whistled and cheered as he thrust his hips to match the accent of each meter. A smile that showed every polished tooth in his mouth. "And of course there's Anapestic: short, short, long. And of course, my favorite, a long series of Spondaic meter: long, long, long..." He threw his head back and let his hips carry each word and moved his arms back and forth with closed fists as if he were rowing a boat.

"Then when she's been taken care of, my job is done so I just punch the old time card and it's home free. But this one girl, she was a trip, man. After I took all this time and planning to make sure she would be satisfied, she just rolled over and said, 'Wanna know who I was thinking of?' God! Can you believe it? What gratitude! I turned to her and said, 'Listen babe, I don't need you! I can do just fine without you.' Then she said to me, 'Who the hell do you think you are, 'Onan the Barbarian'? That's what I love—a girl who knows her bible. Yeah, right, I'm sure she spent a lot of time in Sunday school."

man in the lime light. She stares at him with eyes through tunnel vision" he thought.

"Gen-Gen."

She turned to him, "Sorry, what?"

"Do you remember when we first met at school? How you used to ride me all the time? Like when I started the protests against apartheid. You said I was a bleeding-heart liberal and that I was just jumping on the bandwagon and that I could care about the South Africans without having to get arrested?"

"Yes, I remember." She looked at him not knowing what to expect. She dabbed the corners of her mouth with a cocktail napkin. "But you went to the embassy and got arrested anyway."

"Yep."

"Ken, what are we talking about?"

"Oh, just the good old days."

"Kenny, do you really want to discuss this now?"

"I guess you're right."

Gen felt as if she had replaced Eric in the lime light, but her audience wasn't applauding.

Ken could hear ice clinking in a glass during the long pause before his mother spoke on the telephone. He rolled his eyes and rested his forehead in his hand and then ran his fingers through his hair.

"Hello," came the unsteady voice, implicitly denouncing sobriety.

"Hi mom."

"Kenny?"

"How are you?"

"We miss you."

"How's dad doing?"

"Your father's fine. We were just talking about you. We were wondering when you'd be returning home."

"Ma, you know I won't be returning. Listen, I don't want to get into this scene, okay?"

George, our patron wants to make a withdrawal of two-hundred dollars." There was a pause. "Your father says that's fine. He'll send it out in the mail tomorrow."

"Thanks."

"What did you say?" she managed to say despite the tremor in her stomach.

"I said 'Thanks.'"

"Oh, I just couldn't believe my ears, that's all."

Ken gripped his teeth and the temptation to stricken back gnawed at his stomach. He heard his father say, "Don't talk to Kenny like that—you wouldn't if you were sober." He felt some of the pressure in his chest fade.

"Well how would you know? She was the last time you saw me sober?" she answered back.

"It's been too long—that's all I can say."

"Yeah—that is about all you can say."

Ken was starting to feel roped in—tied up like he used to feel. When he was younger, he felt like a third man in a boxing ring—like a referee who gets the punch in addition to the opponent. He felt his hand getting numb and realized he was squeezing the phone.

"Mom—mom," he broke in. "Do you two have to start fighting when I'm on the phone?"

"What's the matter—getting homesick?"

"No, just sick of home."

His mother gave a laugh which sparked an old, familiar feeling in Ken that carried the definition of unhappiness.

"I gotta go now. I'll talk to you later. Say goodbye to dad for me."

Before she could say anything else; she heard the receiver go dead. She stared at it for a minute then let it fall to her breast. She raised her glass a little and emptied the contents, then put the receiver back on the phone. Her husband was on the other side of *The Washington Post*.

"Kenny said goodbye—I think."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44

# Sarasota

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

and beat me right then. My arms were sliding backwards on the counter. My right hand bumped a fork and I wrapped my fingers around it. "And this way," he continued, "I'll have all night to look forward to it." He threw his hand from my jaw and kicked open the screen door so hard that the home seemed to roll a few inches.

It wasn't until the sound of his engine faded that I slid my back down the counter and cried. I stayed that way for a long time.

The next morning Daddy didn't whup my backside with his belt any harder than he had before. But he made me tell him what I saw. It sure wasn't the time for lying so I told him "bout Mrs. Trumble and even 'bout the pictures on Richard's bureau." "He put my daughter's face on that of our savior," he mumbled on his way out of my room. He sat in the family room and mumbled it there also, that is until he saw the Trumbles leaving for Sunday mass without latching their door. He strutted over there and walked right in, just as if he'd been invited, so no one would notice.

I could see his shadow milling through their family room, then it disappeared down the hallway. The smashing came a few minutes later, the smashing of the glass that protected my portraits. Daddy must have been throwing them 'cause the sounds came from both sides of their trailer. When he was finished he walked out just as calmly as he entered.

It wasn't 'till 'round two o'clock when Richard came marching over to my trailer, calling for my daddy by his first name. Daryl was dragging from Richard's sleeve, trying to stop him. Daryl's feet were wrapped up in paper towels, they had circles of blood on the bottom. I guess he didn't notice the glass in time. Daddy told me not to leave the house and met Richard 'fore he reached our front door. Daryl limped away.

Daddy had a soda in his hand, he was coping with the bubbles through pursed lips. Richard was jabbering away, pointing to both our trailers and in the junkyard's direction. Daddy compressed his lips again, his Adam's apple bobbed. Then Richard started yelling and kept pointing to the junkyard. My daddy's eyes widened and the soda fell from his hand, he ran back inside and snatched the Remington twelve gauge from under his bed. "You stay the hell inside!" he yelled to me on his way back out the door.

I waited 'till Daddy was hobbling into the woods before running after Richard. There was a strong April wind pushing all my hair to the left side of my face. The petals from Mrs. Underbill's tulips were skidding by my feet along with some dried leaves and an occasional newspaper. "Richard!" I yelled, still running closer. I tucked my hair behind my ears and yelled again, "Richard!" He turned around, barely able to hear me in the wind. "What did you do Richard? Why'd you tell on us?" He mimicked a smile and continued walking to his trailer. "Daryl didn't break your stupid pictures! Daryl didn't do nothing!" He spun around this time. "It was my Daddy!"

Richard stood there stupidly, his lips were moving but nothing was coming out. Daryl grabbed the back of my shirt and started tugging me to the junkyard.

I kept wanting Daryl to slow down 'cause of his bandages but it was as if he didn't feel nothing. Shadows of thick silver clouds were rolling by our feet, making it look like we were running faster and faster. Instead of taking the path we pushed ourselves through some prickier bushes and came out by the left side of the Fury, the side Richard must have been watching us from.

Sarasota was up on its hind legs, trying to stretch the rope to get closer to Daddy. Its

paws were up in the air just like Daryl and I taught it to do when it was begging for food. But this time I noticed something I hadn't before. On its belly, there were two rows of pink nipples.

In the few moments before my Daddy shot Sarasota I realized that I never thought of it as a she. I was too set on keeping her for myself to notice. I imagined what I bound from her, the chance to have puppies living from her milk. And there she stood now, bearing to my daddy's shotgun the lives she would never know about, just like I taught her.

I thought I might be able to quickly untie her when the gun went off. Daddy was knocked backwards and slid a few feet down the hill. Sarasota was thrown clear to other side, the black rope finally blown from her neck. I'm not sure when the report from the shot ended and Daryl's scream began. His hands were quivering over his head and his mouth was wider than I'd ever seen it. The shriek was dry and high pitched, like the whistle of a tea kettle. Though I'm sure my memory has lengthened it over the years, it seemed to keep going and going. It was as if all the sounds he never made had been saved up for that moment and were now coming out at once. My body felt heavy, like when you step out of an elevator and feel like you're still going down. I fell on my knees and let the wind quarrel with my hair. I could still see the swirling gun smoke.

I didn't notice my daddy leaving. I must have been kneeling there for a while. Daryl's whole body was shaking and I couldn't get him to stop, even when I put my arms around him. I pulled him up to the car with me and lied with him in the backseat. It was warm in the car, almost hot, but Daryl was still quivering so I pulled him on top of me. The sun broke through the clouds and the temperature seemed to go up another ten degrees. My back was becoming sticky with sweat, so was my forehead.

The tighter I pulled Daryl to me the less he trembled. His breath was sour and humid, like a summer drizzle in Florida. I pulled off our shirts that were ripped from the thorns and let my body warm Daryl's. He had red scratches all over his arms, I guess I did too but I couldn't feel them. I couldn't even feel the bruises where Daddy had whupped me. I pushed the arch of Daryl's back between my legs and he finally stopped trembling. It didn't hurt like Mrs. Parker told me it would.

The sky was blue this time, through the windows. The trailer park was gone, it had to be. The sky could only be so blue anywhere but Connecticut.

The paper towels around Daryl's feet had turned completely red with blood. A few drops fell onto my legs and were pushed up my thighs. My whole body was sweating now. Up until that moment I never knew what it meant to be so hot. Daryl was like one of those men shoveling coal into the furnace of a train, making us go faster and faster. Thinking this I started to giggle out loud. My father had scolded laughter, but now even he was too far away to hear.

Daryl started moving faster than ever; it felt as though we could never slow down. I opened my mouth and shouted. The limitation of my senses, Mrs. Parker had told me, was the knowledge of how sin came into the world.

Daryl's heat went through me like a giant filter, leaving behind a cooperation of thought and bone, both inside me and out. I arched my head back and watched the inside of the car warm in the beauty of God's spring light. It was as though the light shone straight through Daryl's slouched body and into mine, filling me with His conviction that summer was almost here.

I wondered for a moment how I had gotten God's attention, and then imagined the way Sarasota must have looked to God, curled in a broken ball a few feet from her outstretched rope. A black apostrophe in the dirt.

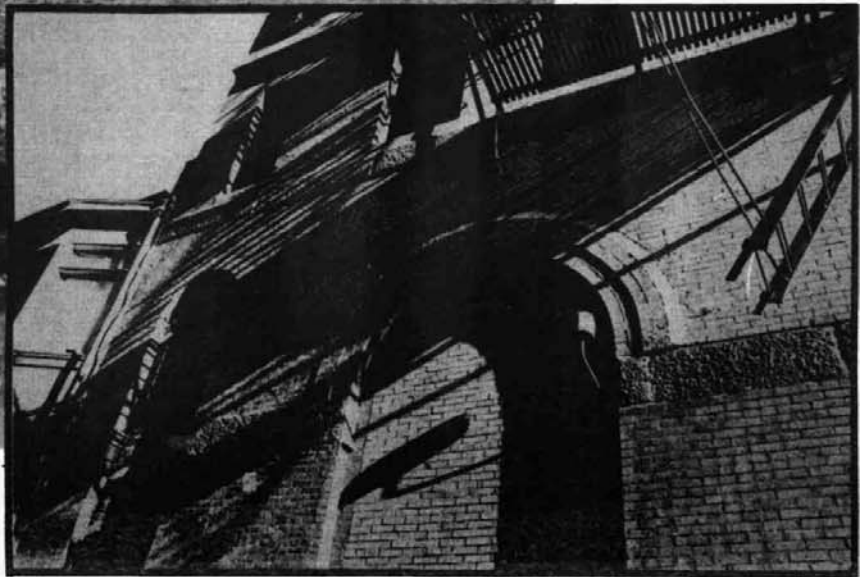
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**Baltimore  
Photographs  
by  
James LoScalzo**





## Chalk

He looked at the empty glass in her hand. She caught his stare and pulled the partially opened robe across her chest defensively. He just shook his head.

"Your pity is touching, George. Why don't you can it and take it to a local distributor?"

"Who would that be—Kenny maybe," he said in a monotone voice looking over his reading glasses. "Why don't you let up on that boy. Starting out in life is difficult."

"George, are you really that dense, or are you just as callous as I think you are?" She resorted to attack in defense of herself. She gave up threatening her husband by using their son's affection years ago. Now, her son's manipulation was still habit. Her efforts were consequently directed to the emptying of bottles and surrendering to the heart-numbing effect of alcohol. Her husband saw his wife emotionally ruthless and the best way to cope with her was to keep her occupied. Their emotional instincts allowed their son to be used as a weapon in the marital battle.

"It's good for him to be on his own and earning his living. He's learning what the real world is like."

"I think he already knows what the real world is like." She got up and headed toward the kitchen. He set the newspaper on his lap, took off his glasses, and stared at his wife shuffling off in her slippers.

"Why should I?"

Ken was still sitting at the telephone stand, recuperating from the bout when he heard Eric yawn.

"Who was that—Virginia Woolf?"

"Eric, why don't you leave the one-liners on the stage, okay?"

Eric slumped back down into the chintz couch sensing the foul weather ahead.

"Fine, sorry."

"Yeah, I know. I don't mean to deprive you of my personal life. It's just that I don't care to see it cheapened by it being used in your monologue at the club."

"When are you going to lighten up. A lot of people have a rough family background. You're not the only one. What separates the successful people from the failures is the ability to use that to their advantage. If you get a lemon, make lemonade."

"Great, that's what I need. Pearls of wisdom from Henny Youngman."

"No, not really. I know better than to cast pearls before you."

"Very funny. Why don't you save those pearls and string them for the next girl you want to sack because that's about all they're good for."

Both paused for the stalemate.

"How's Genny these days? I haven't seen her since the two of you came down to the Shop."

"Fine, just fine."

"Well, there's another good subject."

"What's that supposed to mean?" "Damn. All I meant was that you let your parents control you too much. When I was twenty-one, I was working clubs and had been on my own for two years already. If you could devote this much time and energy to your writing instead of your parents, you probably wouldn't need to call them up and ask for money."

Ken was too tired to respond. He didn't think arguing with Eric was worth this time anyway. He got up slowly and walked back to his bedroom. Eric heard the door close and then the springs of the bed give under his weight. He got up from the couch and pulled a small black address book out from the drawer of the telephone stand. He leafed through the pages and dialed a number.

"Lisa, it's Eric. Wanna go for a hayride today?"

Gen was walking hand-in-hand with Ken along the Potomac on Haines Point. He stopped and looked up at a jet landing at National Airport. The engines screamed over head. Gen flinched and tightened her shoulders. Ken just kept staring up and absorbed the terrific vibration of the engines that pummelled the air and water, and shook the concrete beneath his feet. He started walking again and Gen looked at him, brushed her black hair over her shoulders and shoved her free hand into a coat pocket. Her wide green eyes, and cherub-like nose and mouth took shelter behind the curtain of black hair that fell forward on either side of her face as she let her stare fall to the ground. Autumn was well under way and there was a chill in the air by the water. She noticed that Ken was violating his general rule against public displays of affection by holding her hand.

The sky was completely overcast but Ken noticed the clouds were heavy with sunlight promising a break in the weather. He was also wondering about what kind of father he would make if he ever found himself in that situation.

Gen broke his daydream. "Why don't you ever talk about Eric? You live with the guy day in and day out. Yet you never utter a word."

"Why should I?"

Gen displayed a kind of affectation ignorance. "Gosh, I don't know. Maybe because for the reason I just gave."

"Well, I don't really see him that much. We both work at night."

"Yeah, but you both have days free."

"Well he's usually working out or at a tanning salon during the day and when he's doing neither of those he's writing new material or buying clothes. And I'm always writing—so I wouldn't see him anyway. On the weekends, he's always with a girl."

"So he does date a lot. Appearance dictates behavior."

"That's an interesting way of putting it." Ken let go of her hand and picked up a stone to try skipping it on the river.

"Does he ever talk about his relationships with women?"

"On stage or off? Sometimes I think he goes out with so many women to develop new material."

"Maybe he does—is that possible?"

"I don't give him the credit for being even that deep—or shallow, however you want to look at it. The guy doesn't think of anything but women, drugs, and the Shop."

"Yeah, but he's successful."

Ken started walking. Gen caught up with him in a few paces. His gait turned strident.

"Is that success? Is success the only important thing?"

Gen could see that his eyes, behind the Raybans, were sharply focused on her as if to look through her. His eyebrows were knit tightly. She stroked his brow with her free hand. He moved his head to the side. She retracted her arm, put her hand back in her pocket while still staring at him. He turned to face the river. Gen knew not to disturb him. She backed away meekly and sat down on a bench. He put both hands on the railing next to the river. His eyes delved into the water.

"Did you ever wonder," he said without turning around, "what it would be like to walk on the bottom of the river? Would you come across nautical artifacts, maybe equipment left over from the Civil War? You know, Union Troops were stationed here during the War. The Washington Monument was only half complete and this land was still soggy from draining the marshes. They slaughtered cows and pigs right on these hills to feed the men. Fever took a lot of lives, including one of Lincoln's sons."

"I didn't know that," she said, hoping he'd turn around and face her. "I think all you would find is garbage and maybe some bodies wrapped up in chicken wire." Her attempt at humor failed.

"Well, that could be interesting. I wonder what they would have to say?"

"Who?"

"The bodies—in chicken wire."

"Probably that there are a lot of crabs down there." She let a little laugh try to coax him back to her. She was unconsciously kneading the wood slats of the bench with her hands.

"No, what I'd probably find is just layers upon layers of currents—eddyings and swirling about my eyes and ears, and fingers." He paused a moment. "Gen?"

"Yes?" She had a look of hope on her face.

"Do you love me?"

"Yes."

Ken raised his eyes to meet a landing jet. Gen braced herself for the scream of engines. Ken stared straight at the aircraft and a faint smile washed away his thoughts of love.

Young man. Young man! Would you please come here—now!" Ken hurried over. He had worked up a sweat and snapped a lock of auburn hair away from his face with a sharp turn of his head.

"Is there a problem with your lunch, sir?"

Ken found himself staring face to face with an old man who was menacingly holding a home fried potato in mid-air on the end of his fork.

I asked for 'extra crispy homefries' when you took my order. Look at this. Does this look extra crispy to you?" He jabbed it at Ken as if it were the verdict of guilt and Ken was the criminal.

"Sir, I wrote 'extra crispy on your guest check. Both the kitchen and the dining room are under-staffed today." Ken looked around at his tables, two of which were trying to get his attention to take his order.

"Sir, I have tables to get to." Ken was trying to be calm. He kept thinking of what the day manager was constantly reminding him: 'The customer is always right.'

"Do you mean to tell me that you won't do anything about this?"

"Sir, even if I did, you wouldn't get it back from the kitchen for at least twenty minutes."

A high-pitched, crackling yell lashed back. "Twenty minutes?"

"Yes sir—the kitchen's backed up."

The confrontation caught the attention of the hostess who started to hurry over to head off a major scene.

"Ken, what's wrong here?"

"Listen young man. I have a pacemaker. I can't take all this abuse. Are you going to do something about my homefries?"

"Marge, this 'gentleman' " he said perfunctorily, "wants his homefries to be extra crispy and I explained to him it wouldn't be possible."

"Excuse us for a moment sir."

Ken rolled his eyes as Marge escorted him off to the other side of the dining room.

"Marge, that old coot over there is just trying to bust my ass. I have twelve tables, no help, half of the kitchen staff isn't here..."

"Ken," she interrupted, "when I asked you last week to come in today, I wasn't expecting the rush. I can't see the future. I called John and Phillip to come in and help you. They'll be here any minute. Now would you please settle things with the guest and get to your other tables?"

"I'd like to take the geriatric with his homefries to the kitchen, strap him to the

microwave, turn it on manual override, and make him watch his frigging homefries turn extra crispy as his pacemaker goes haywire."

"Ken, just go back and fix things with the guest. You can leave when Phillip and John get here. Okay?"

"Fine."

Ken walked back to the old man and picked up his homefries. "I'm sorry sir. I'll take these back to the kitchen and fix them up."

"Well, it's about time," he snapped back.

"A few minutes in the microwave should do it."

The man's eyes opened wide, "Microwave? how close is it to my table?"

"Not close enough," Ken answered.

Ken left as soon as the other two waiters arrived. He took off his black apron and threw it in one of the booths. Before he knew it, he was unlocking his apartment door. He walked in and saw Eric naked with a girl. He had to look twice to realize it was Gen.

He didn't realize Gen's nakedness as much as Eric's. He was standing there, tall, muscular, and blond with sunlight shining through the French doors onto his bronze skin. Ken felt like he was looking at himself, or should be looking at himself, but was seeing the furthest thing from himself. The image faded away. Eric's wide grin completely clothed him before Ken. Then Gen became very naked to his eyes.

There was a look of trumped up defiance on her face. Ken just stood in the doorway. Gen was looking, hoping for an expression. She braced herself for rage, for hatred, for a scream. There was none.

"Ken!" Eric said with mild surprise, "...didn't expect you back so soon."

"That's trite, Eric."

"I just invited Gen over to help me celebrate my birthday. I thought this would be an appropriate suit."

Ken echoed, "'Appropriate'." He was still staring at Gen. "That's the only word that came to my mind, Eric, 'appropriate.' What, no Hershey's Syrup, Gen? Or did you already eat?" Eric let out an aspired laugh.

She became aware of her stare that was fixed on his eyes. His eyes were limp, not really focused on anything. They were the only sign of intensity in his being. She wanted to know where it had gone—what happened. She grew scared without knowing why.

Ken continued, "I'm sorry, Gen." Eric's head cocked a little to the side. He still hadn't bothered to put any clothing on.

"What?" She was totally lost by his words and the expressionless face that marked them like a tombstone.

"I'm sorry for wasting your time."

Gen knew for sure that by now there would be no scream.

"Some people are born without legs—some without arms. And some people are born without vital organs—they're the lucky ones. They don't live." He put his sunglasses on. He liked the darkness they temporarily leant to him. He turned around in the spot he hadn't moved from when he first opened the door and closed it quietly on his way out. He paused with his hand still on the doorknob, men walked down the stairs and out the building.

Gen was lying face down on the couch. She saw him in her mind walking back through the red brick, wrought iron, Georgetown neighborhood. He walked through the door as his mother picked up the *Post* from the porch.

Eric knelt down on the floor beside her and started to slowly kiss the nape of her neck. She pulled her hair out of his way over her shoulders. She didn't move. She wanted Eric—she wanted him to burn a ghost from her stomach.

END

We were not able to include Debbie Frank, Mike Smith, and Joe Wenderoth in the contributor's page. But we thank them for their contributions to the *Spring '88 Garland*.

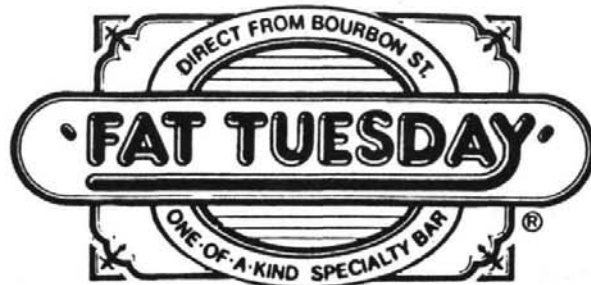


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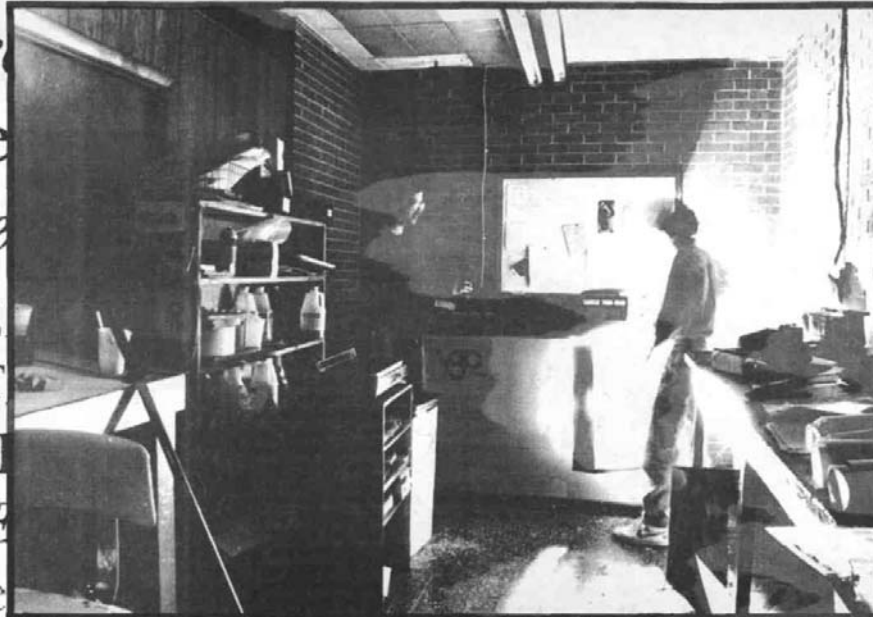
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