

the
CRUCIBLE

the literary magazine of lock haven university



ANNUAL

1997

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THE LITERARY MAGAZINE OF LOCK HAVEN UNIVERSITY

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<i>Amy Linn</i>	
Place Where One Is Born	7
<i>Tori Mello</i>	
While the Metro Creeps Along	9
<i>Lisa Negri</i>	
The Voice	11
<i>Carrie Wood</i>	
My Name	13
<i>Justin Brocious</i>	
I, Inside	14
<i>Eileen Stephens</i>	
Call of the Coyote	16
<i>Randall McKee</i>	
Central Pennsylvanian Morning Commuter Blues	19
<i>noelle t. daidone</i>	
Voyage of Futility	21
<i>Heather Rooney</i>	
A Pink Flamingo	22
<i>noelle t. daidone</i>	
Prism	24
<i>Sonnet O'Connell</i>	
Room 216	25
<i>Beth Bertram</i>	
Crayola Masterpiece	30
<i>John McKnight</i>	
Candy-Coated Country	31

<i>Beth Bertram</i>	
Tea	33
<i>Nathaniel A. Thomas</i>	
Wounded	35
<i>Carrie Ditler</i>	
Of Dying Pomegranates	38
<i>Miles</i>	
It is	39
<i>Derek Hoyman</i>	
5:30 AM	40
<i>John McKnight</i>	
Dawn's Last Light: a Sestina	41
<i>Amy Linn</i>	
Angel Unaware	44
<i>Derek Hoyman</i>	
Young Love	45
<i>Boyd A. Ulmer</i>	
Promiscuous	48
<i>Amy Linn</i>	
It Is Finished	52
<i>Tori Mello</i>	
A Different Kind of Child	53
<i>John McKnight</i>	
The Blessed Trinity of Religious Puns	60
<i>John McKnight</i>	
Across the Street	62
<i>Nathaniel A. Thomas</i>	
Goldilocks Enraged	63
<i>Eric Dalton</i>	
To Whom It May Concern	64
<i>Beth Bertram</i>	
Fastened to Your World	67

<i>Max Mykhailenko</i>	
English Major	68
<i>Danielle Resnick</i>	
oh	69
<i>Mark L. Hudson</i>	
Our Stream	71
<i>Laura Wychulis</i>	
Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Sleeping Bag	77

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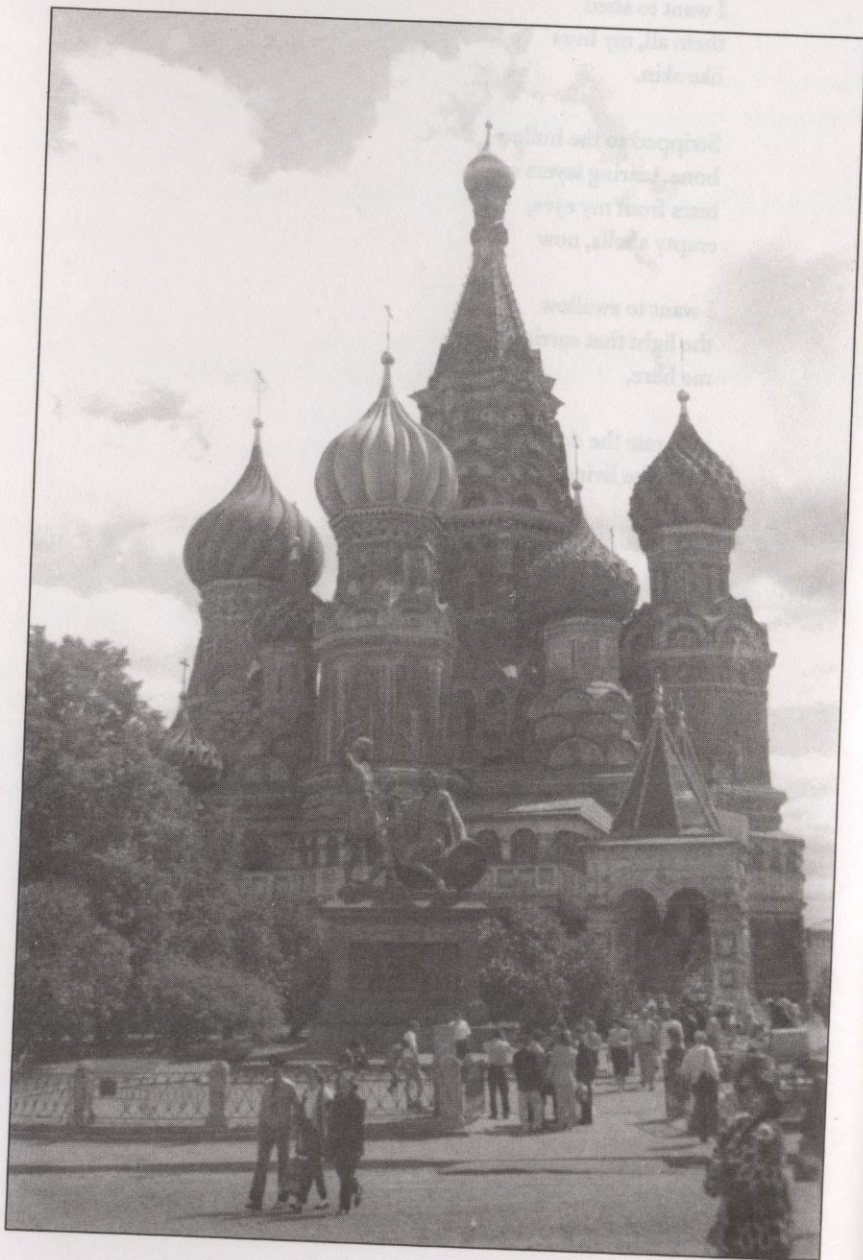
Amy Linn
Place Where One Is Born

I want to shed
them all, my lives
like skin.

Stripped to the hollow
bone, tearing layers of
tears from my eyes,
empty shells, now

I want to swallow
the light that carried
me here,

separate the dead
from the living.



Tori Mello

While the Metro Creeps Along

Shuffling, pushing, coughing. Rubbing sleep out of my eyes with one hand, clutching my backpack straps with the other. Doors slide shut, eyes lock onto mine, whispers pass over my ears.

I shift nervously and reach for the aluminum handrail next to my head as the train lurches and tugs forward through the tunnel. The handrail is slick with the oils of thousands of hands: hands that pull beets and carrots from the ground, hands that sell family heirlooms to tourists on street corners, hands that slit the throats of passers-by who refuse to give up their skimpy wallets.

A Moscow Metro train fills quickly on a Thursday morning. During the summer, it fills with more than just people. Heat, noise, smell. It stinks like the putrid combination of a locker room and a dimly-lit bar. The stench is unlike anything that my nostrils have ever experienced. This morning, a gypsy woman and her skeletal naked son wail at one end of the car, breaking their cries with an occasional jangle of a tambourine.

I am frightened to the point of nausea. Me—the college student from an American suburb—alone for the first time in Moscow, a city more menacing than New York, filled with more people than the state of Rhode Island. Moscow is especially dangerous for a naive American blond like I am. I stand out like a turkey in a goat pen, a very uncomfortable turkey who only speaks three Russian phrases. I glance around for a smiling face but to no avail; there's not much to smile about in working class Russia on a hot, stinky Thursday morning.

A slight commotion breaks out as an old woman tells the man sitting beside her to stand up. Actually, she slaps his arm. The woman motions to me, without a smile, to fill the seat. Of course, I step over the feet filling the aisle and sit down; the man glares at me as he takes his place along the greasy handrail. I smile gratefully at the handkerchiefed woman. Her blue eyes study me, but she doesn't smile back. Instead, she barks at me in her native tongue.

"*Ye ne panemayou*," I reply—I don't understand—one of my three Russian phrases—as if it's not obvious. She nods her puckered head and continues speaking. Those eyes strike me, the truest blue I've ever seen, sapphires sparkling under the dim ceiling lights. They look like the eyes of a woman my own age, young and inexperienced, ready to see and do all, out of place buried in all those folds of skin.

I imagine the things those eyes have seen: babies and dictators and work and wars and poverty. Beautiful. Tragic. Glowing. Wise. She's probably not nearly as old as she looks. But life is hard.

She's still talking and I understand some of the words she is saying. I reach for my bag to look in my dictionary, but she touches my arm to stop me. "*Nyet, nyet*," she whispers and shakes her head vigorously. Her hands are soft, brown, and withered,

the only skin visible besides her face. I answer her with the few words I know about myself: *Amerikanka, studentka*, blah blah blah. I quickly run out of words, so in my panic I speak English. Finally, she smiles, nods. I feel more comfortable. My nausea subsides.

We talk this way for some time—she in Russian, me in American. She doesn't understand, and neither do I, but our conversation is remarkable. And somehow very lucid. She tells me I'm beautiful and I return the compliment. She tells me of her children and the people around us on the train. She tells me what some good stops would be, sites to see in Moscow. We talk of weather, the heat. I tell her where I live in the city and where I study, how hard it is to be away from home. We smile the entire time; her hand never leaves my arm.

When we get to my stop, I try to stand, but she holds me. She points to her heart, then to mine, and squeezes my arm. "*Babushka*," she mutters. Her sapphire eyes fill with tears.

This word I know. "Grandmother," I whisper.

I miss my stop to sit with this woman for a few more minutes, my hand on top of hers, still resting on my arm.

Somehow Moscow is no longer frightening, nor is the train smelly or overcrowded. There is simply this old wrinkled woman with radiant blue eyes sitting next to me, holding my arm. I can only guess the things she's talking about. I imagine all the mysteries she might unravel for me if only we spoke the same language. If only I spoke Russian.

She prattles on in her city dialect. Russian is not at all a pretty language, very rough and cold like its countryside. But it's expressive and her voice is filled with emotion and suddenly I realize that it doesn't matter *what* this old woman is saying.

I do understand her; I have already learned.

The Metro creeps along, and I hear and feel and absorb all that this *babushka* has to say.

Lisa Negri

The Voice

I dream at night of spaghetti sauce and the tarantella.
Homemade ravioli and the Alps call my name while
the voices of my ancestors sing Ave Maria
through the night.

Am I so different because I call her Nonna
instead of Grandma? She loves me
the same, I think.

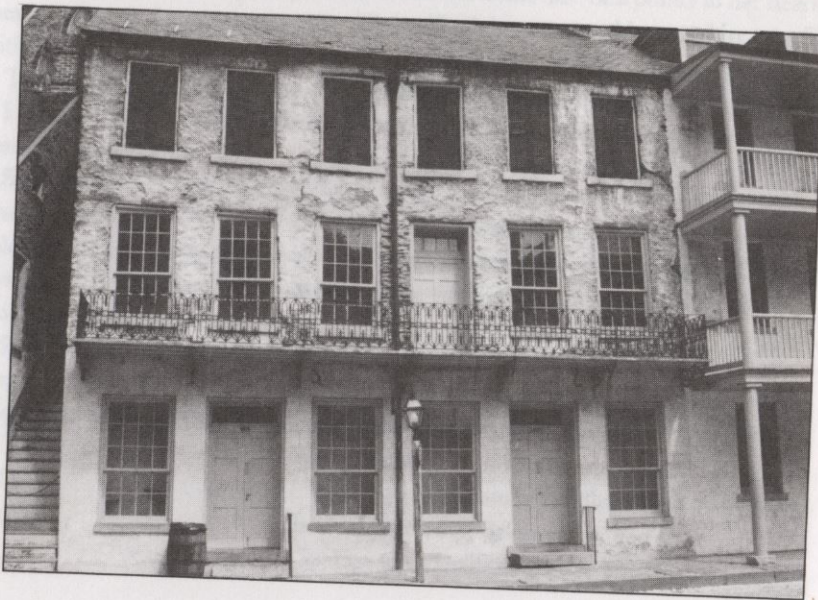
I hear other voices in my dreams:
a father who sounds like Monty Python,
yet speaks the language of Milan;
a grandmother born in France and raised high
in the Italian Alps.

The voices are different somehow,
unmistakably the same,
each one coming from the same small town,
Secchi di Rocchetta.

My parents have the same last name.
I try to explain to strangers—
it's like the name Smith or Jones,
very common, you see?
"They" never do see, picturing instead
all sorts of Geraldo-like family secrets.

The voices whirl around in my head,
spinning out of control.
Who am I? I need to know.

I am the voice of a thousand years of immigrants,
the voice of France, of England,
of Italy, of America.
I am the voice of me.



Carrie Wood
My Name

My name comes from Latin. Actually, my name comes from Caroline, which comes from Charles, which comes from Latin. It's supposed to mean strength or strong character or my least favorite definition: manly. Most people have Carrie as a nickname, but not me. It's my whole name; that's it, just Carrie.

My mother tells me that I am named after the little girl on "Little House on the Prairie," whose name was also Carrie. Mom used to name all her dolls Carrie as a child and couldn't wait to have a little girl whom she could name Carrie. Out of all five of us, I was the only one whose sex she guessed correctly before I was born. I guess she got a certain feeling in her stomach that told her that her Carrie was on the way. Maybe I kicked harder than the others and that was how she knew. Or maybe the morning sickness was worse. Somehow, she knew it was me.

When I lived at home in Philly, they would say my name *Carrie*, with the *a* sounding like *apple*. But up here they say *Cairrie*, like *care* or *air*. It doesn't make much of a difference to me how my name is said. What bothers me really is how people spell my name. Some people make the unforgivable error of spelling it Carry. I will never understand it. I am not a verb, or a command with "you" understood. I am me, Carrie; that's it. I am no one's doll, I am not manly, and I am not a verb or a command. That's it.

My sister has a beautiful name—Sarah. It means princess in Hebrew. I used to wish I had her name. I'd much rather be a princess than manly or strong. But now I take certain comfort in the fact that at least my name spelled backwards isn't harass.

There are times I want to reject my name. Even though I've given up on the manly definition, I still don't feel strong. And I'm not sure I have a strong character. I used to want to change my name to something like Felicity, which means happiness, or Hope, or some other thing. Maybe something simple like Anne or Jenny. Maybe something that sounds pretty like Rachel or Brittany. But I guess the truth of it is that none of these names express the real me either. I am not happiness or always hopeful, and there's nothing about me that is simple. I don't think I'd fit very well into a pretty little name either.

Actually, I've grown to like my name. Maybe it is not a pretty sound and gets easily confused with a verb, but it is unique. I hope that someday I will grow into my name, like I grow into shoes that are a size too big. Someday I'd like to be strong or have a strong character. Maybe someday I'll be my mother's doll. But until then I'll live in this name I haven't quite reached yet. I will continue to try to be Carrie.

Justin Brocious

I, Inside

When the snow falls heavy,
it leaves a silence,
a numb cushion to the senses,
like America and the walls around it.

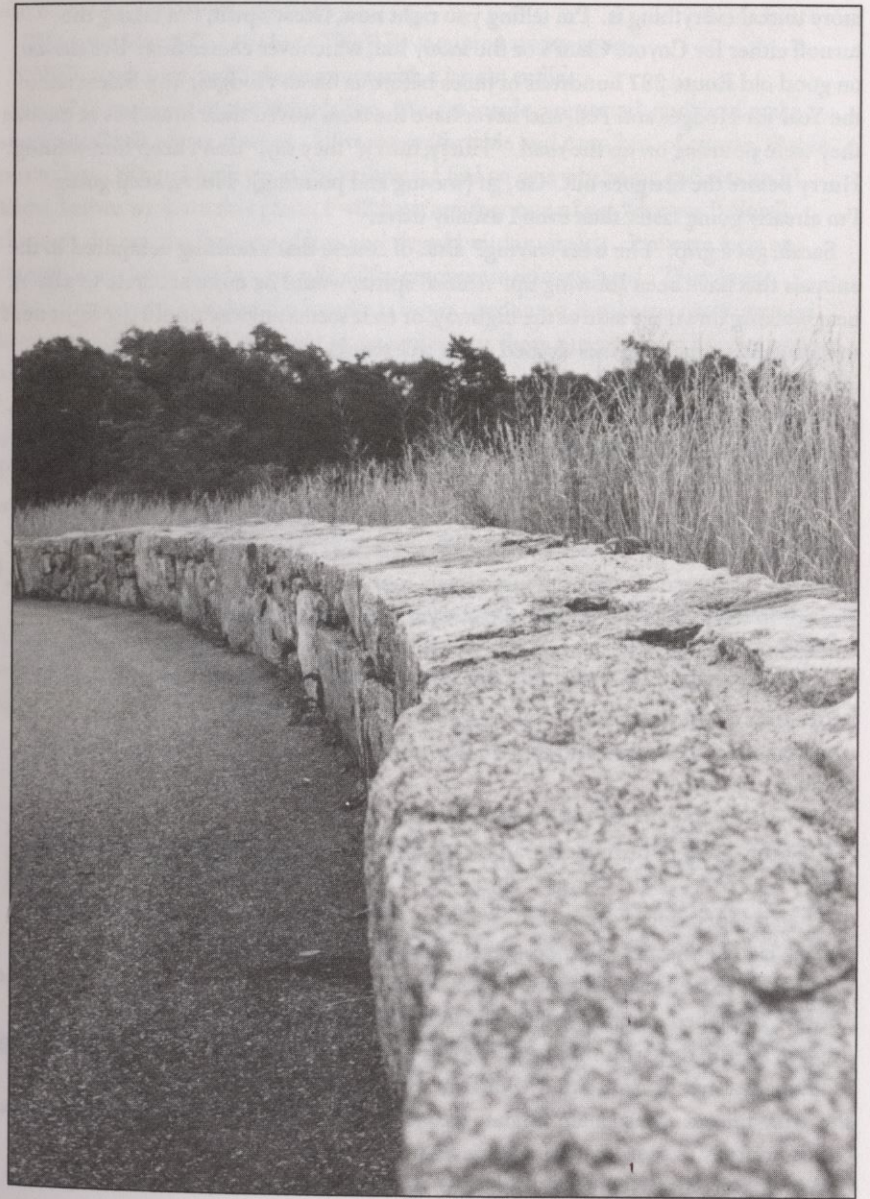
I, inside, can hear the faint scratching
of a Roman's plea for acceptance,
while America denies
what was given so freely before.

I, inside, see the four faces
of tyranny in art,
high atop the Paha Sapa.
I, inside, where the cries are ignored.

I, inside, can feel these walls,
yellow and sickly in color,
shake, with the power of Gilman's vengeance,
only to be stopped for Patriarchy is restored.

I, inside, can taste the blood of '68,
for another dream shattered
onto the pavement
where batons replace the whips and unity is torn.

I, inside, can smell the rain,
that dank, earthy scent of springtime's birth,
wash away the silence of winter,
leaving I, inside, and alone to find the door.



Eileen Stephens
Call of the Coyote

Thank God we only have another hour until we get there. The longer I drive, the more unreal everything is. I'm telling you right now, Great Spirit, I'm taking the turnoff either for Coyote Clem's or the loony bin, whichever comes first. I've driven on good old Route 287 hundreds of times before as Sarah Hodges, Top Salesman of the Year for Hodges and Pell, and never have the trees waved their branches at me like they were pointing on up the road. "Hurry, hurry," they say, "don't keep him waiting. Hurry before the fire goes out. Go, go (waving and pointing). Hurry, keep going." I'm already going faster than even I usually drive.

Sarah, get a grip. The trees waving? But, of course that's nothing compared to the animals that have been showing up. Animal spirits would be more accurate to say. A bear walking down the side of the highway, or so it seems anyway until I get right next to it, then it's gone. Big cats draped along tree trunks and then are gone when I glance back. Mattie Wind Feather suggested that I may need to get closer to all animals. "The spirits of the four-legged are drawing near your heart. Take what they offer. Come into their space with an open heart; the animals will teach you to feel again."

Well, Mattie, I don't have time to feel—too much work to do. I don't have time for these cursed dreams I've been having either, but does anyone out there or up there or wherever listen to me? No. I'm just a lowly mortal trying to make a living and wham, I've got to wake up in the middle of the night with visions of people dying in a collapsing building. Do I know where? Do I know when? Do I know whom to call to say, "Listen, Man, your building is going to collapse next Wednesday, so you'd better shut down your manufacturing line for this week. Check it out, you know. See what happens. How do I know? Oh, I had this dream, you see." Right. I can just picture it.

They're coming to take me away, I hope.

I'm even afraid to turn on the radio. I might hear the theme from the "Twilight Zone."

Then again, it doesn't have to be in the middle of the night. It could be at three o'clock last Wednesday afternoon when Marty walked into my office while I'm supposedly catching up on correspondence to find me rigid in my chair, clutching the armrest, drenched in sweat and unable to move because of the fear. Is this kind of thing in the job description for a personal secretary? Maybe it falls under the heading of "Expect Anything" subtitled "But Don't Breathe a Word of It." So not only did she bring me out of my catatonic state then, but she is actually accompanying me now on this journey to see Coyote Clem the Shaman who specializes in dreams.

Whoa, wait what's this now? The trees again. Shit. Now they're motioning me to slow down. They seem to be saying, "You'll be stopping soon."

If we are stopping to eat lunch, I must commend you on your superb timing, Great Spirit. Marty has just completed her you-aren't-going-to-make-me-work-through-lunch ritual. First she looks at her watch, then at me and then out the window. If I don't catch on the first time, she just keeps repeating it until I do. Poor girl, I think she's broken her record this time.

"Hungry, Marty?" I ask her. "We'll be stopping pretty soon."

"Well, read my mind!" she answers with a bright smile.

I pull in and park at the Wheels Inn. We get inside, are seated, and even make some small talk about clothes. All very comfortable and cozy, but, of course, that is not to last. When I look up at the waitress, I feel an overwhelming sadness and I know before we leave this place, I will have another one of my "dreams." So all through dinner, the feelings of loss and dread build up inside. It always feels as though somebody has lit a bundle of firecrackers inside my head. They keep exploding one by one, but the bundle is never used up; it just keeps crackling and keeps me fidgeting. I don't want to eat and talk at these times; I want to pace around and scream.

And then, like a body slam, the vision comes. Fire, noise like an explosion, tables overturned—Omgod, it's here! It's going to happen right here in this restaurant. People will get caught in it. Some will die and some will wish they had. When? Tell me when!

"Oh, Marty," I manage to stammer through tears, "this place...please let's go," and I head for the door.

The minute I'm outside, it's gone, as if someone has poured icy water over my head. The dream is quenched, irretrievable. I pull and claw at the locked car door, trying to get in and hide, to get away. Oh, God, oh, God, oh, God what can I do? Who can I tell? I've got to help them somehow.



Randall McKee

Central Pennsylvanian Morning Commuter Blues

Squared circle turnbuckle
steroid acid suckle
seaweed fern tree
abdomenless sweat bee

cordless burnbarrel
alcohol flame-thrower
cultured shotgun rack
crossing guard bivouac

pinstripe rainbow
big screen bimbo
chain-smoke bait shop
Doberman doorstep

cornstalk stereo
waterproof radio
Dorito truck disaster
wide wheels faster

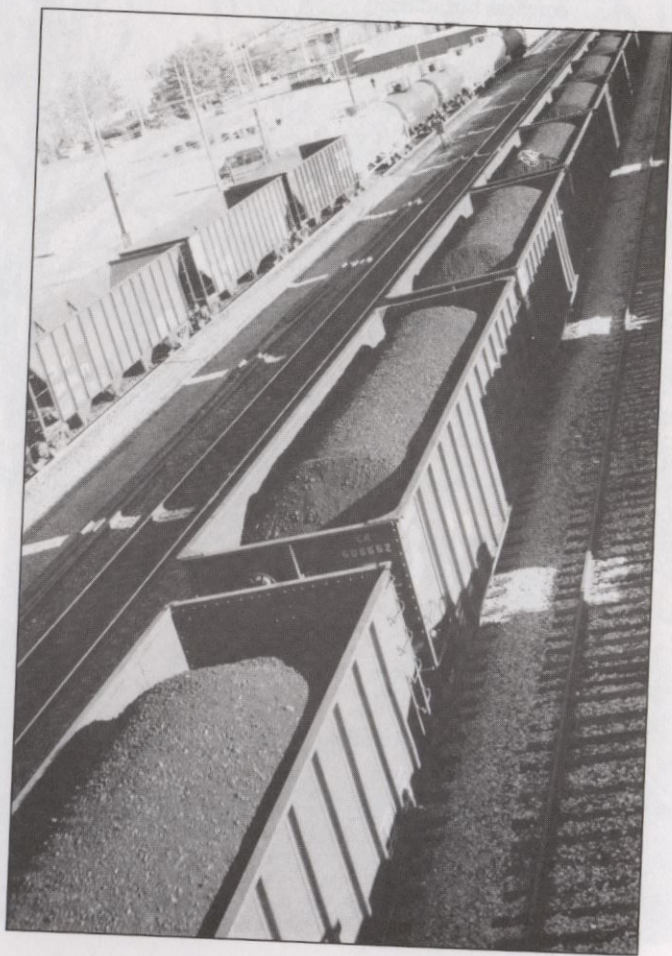
freewheelin' newspaper
two-story skyscraper
stripmine swamp king
trickle-down wax ring

camshaft sinkhole
dimestore payroll
troubleshooting kinfolk
surplus artichoke

pinball two step
shit bag porch step
spiked arm blank boy
perforated brain toy

ground cap stress tab
poison friend alley scab
tell tale down time
futile forced rhyme

front yard highway
hole shot driveway
camouflage moon skies
long shadow sunrise



noelle t. daidone
Voyage of Futility

And so I became lost again
riding all the waves.
For awhile, we ignored the shore.
Yes, it loomed in the distance,
the steadiness of its all-too-familiar sand
was once all you needed to feel complete.
But I changed all that
the morning the birds sang for us;
do you remember the birds?
I can never forget those birds.

And now it's happened again
but where does the blame drift?
Your salty-bitter foam encompassed my offering.
How I drown without dying,
I really thought I might,
how I survived without air,
another premise taken by that mist.

But how many lives can be preserved?
Who gets to be that lucky?

I lost a pearl in the coral reefs
which had been there so long
...pieces of you.

And now there's simply no telling
whether or not a tidal force
stronger than either of us could ever handle
will be the biggest natural disaster of our lives.

You say I shine like...
like the beacons of light pouring out
from the lighthouse through all the dreadful fog
and that that brightness makes you crazy
but will that illumination lead you to
where you should be?

Sailing on is doubtful.

Heather Rooney
A Pink Flamingo

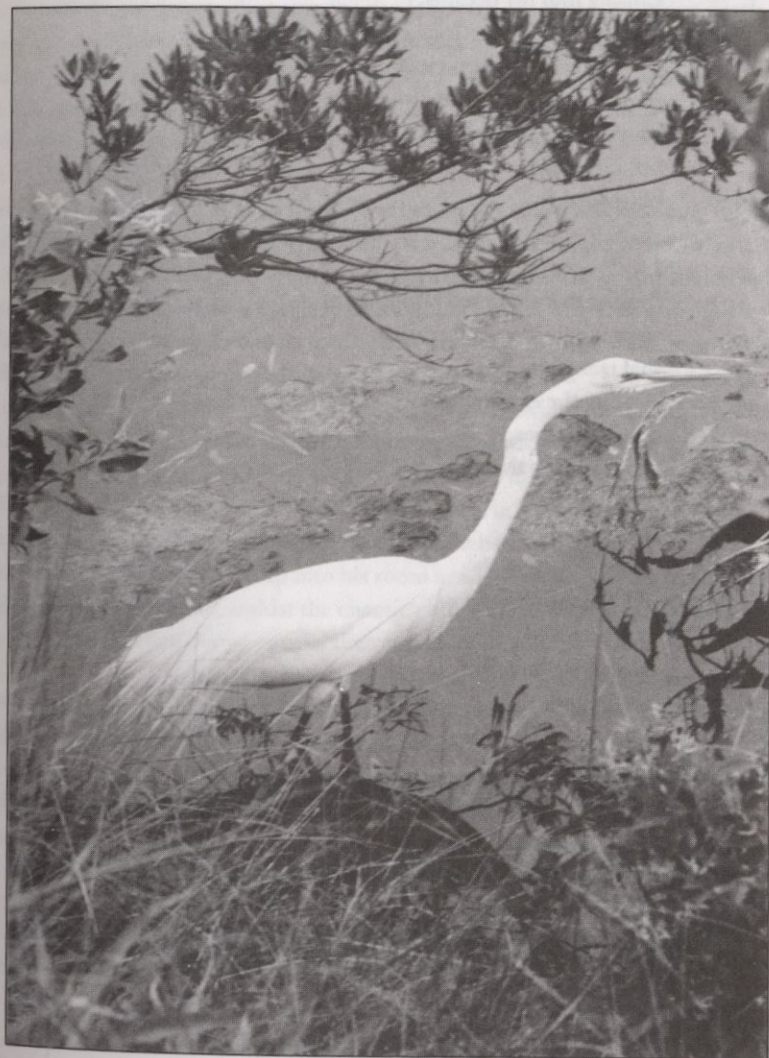
Bright to the eyes
Blinding to the mind
Clorox to the countryside
Meaningless to the blind

Life threatening to the naked
Bothersome to the cold
Loved by those who desire it
And by those who possess it, loathed

Dangerous to the bright
Security to the bland
Whitewashing for a smog-stained city
Pure hell for the uncovered hand

Calming to the neurotic
More depressing to the depressed
A cleansing for a tormented soul
Further regression for the regressed

Troublesome to the traffic
Welcoming to the dry
What you visualize in a winter wonderland
What I see when my TV dies



noelle t. daidone

Prism

Tiny bits of colored glass,
that's all you really are.
Cutting into my dreams.

The infusion of deep violet,
smoky emerald and tawny yellow.
Sharp edges glittering,
but piercing even my moments
of peace.

I will carry on
despite this shattered rainbow
draining the tranquil scarlet
that is my blood,
stealing the earth mud
that is my eyes
transforming the satin peach
that is my skin
into lucid flesh.

Till the mosaic of you
has dissolved
into crystalline dust.

Sonnet O'Connell

Room 216

Feeling sad and dejected, we silently walked to the one place where we were always welcome, room 216. Knowing that the person we needed most wouldn't be there, we were nonetheless drawn to the room the day following Mr. Kuhn's sudden death, as if pulled by an invisible hand to the empty room that had once meant so much to us. At the door, I was met with my friend's somber face. "Would you look at that?" he said, motioning to the sign posted on the door. Taped to the door was an official notice politely stating that we were no longer welcome in the art room unless we paid the fee of ten dollars a month. We had nowhere to go.

At this unexplained expulsion from the art room, my mind was suddenly filled, like a flash flood through a narrow gorge, of the memories I had of the room. My first encounter with the art room was when I was thirteen, a shy, nervous freshman in high school. I was persuaded by a friend to take a pottery class. Expecting an "ordinary" teacher to walk in, I was absolutely astonished when Mr. Kuhn, a small bearded man, shuffled out of the kiln room and started cracking corny jokes. "Did you hear the one about the spaghetti farmer?" he began, his eyes happily twinkling, already chuckling to himself. "His field was two miles long and one foot wide!" As he moved around the pottery room, telling jokes that made you groan, he filled the room with magic.

His room soon became a haven for the lost souls. He was the only one who understood the misfits, the rejects, the individuals who didn't fit in anywhere else in the school. One by one we'd slip into his room as silent as newly fallen snow and confidently create great art amidst the chaotic clutter of his small studio.

I could find nothing more peaceful than sitting at the pottery wheel. Sleeves rolled back to the elbows, I'd straddle the wheel, and flick the switch. With a soft hum, the wheel would start to spin, slowly at first but picking up speed. Around and around the wheel would spin, like a crazed ballerina, forever spinning to forget her worries. Like a housewife kneading dough, I began to push on the clay with the ball of my hand. As I prepared the clay to be thrown into a pot, I worked out the moisture and air bubbles along with my tension. Finally, brilliant beads of water glittering on my gray hands like stars in the dark sky, I'd set the ball of clay onto the center of the spinning disk. I'd firmly push the clay into shape, feeling the soft clay slide through my fingers. After much pressing and guiding with my skilled hands, a beautiful pot would be spinning in the center of the wheel. Many times I would make a pot, only to let it tumble over, destroyed on the wheel. I felt as if I were a child playing in the mud, once again making mud pies after so many years.

There was a door in the corner that led to the tiny kiln room where we fired our finished pots. The room was always comfortably warm from the heat in the kiln. It was to this little hide-away where we ran to tell our deepest secrets to our closest friends. There were rows of dusty shelves along the wall where we kept our current

projects, and across the shelves were strips of tape stating who the shelf belonged to. I had written Sonnet O'Connell in pencil, and over the few years that I had the shelf, my name turned into a familiar blur of gray. On my shelf, there always stood one finished pot, a tall, shiny black cylinder that I had made one of the first days that I was learning to throw pots on the wheel. It was because of this pot that I met one of my dearest friends.

The day after I made the pot, I found a note rolled up into the pot. "I really like this pot." Wondering who it could be from, I took out the note and stuck it in my bag. The next day, I received another note. "If you think I'm going to compliment your pots ever again if you don't write back, you're crazy." was scribbled across the piece of notebook paper. Curious, I wrote back a note, graciously thanking him for his compliment. For the rest of the year, my secret friend and I used the pot to deliver letters to each other. I soon found out who was writing the letters, but the pot was still a place to hide our messages.

From the kiln room, you could hear the small AM/FM radio caked over with dried clay in the front of the classroom. The radio was always on, spouting forth lyrics about eternal love and happiness. It was to this music that we fell in love and that we shared our most cherished moments. The music became the background to all our hopes and dreams, promising us all our young hearts could ever desire. The sweet melodies will continue to forever play in the back of our heads.

To the left of the radio was a pot of melted wax which filled the room with the strong smell of burning wax. The smell drifted into the hallway, seeping through every crack, announcing our presence in every room in the building.

As I stood at the closed door, my thoughts changed direction as suddenly as a flash of lightening, always going back to the same thing, that horrible day in December.

Christmas was rapidly approaching as we worked like squirrels preparing for the winter to make Santa Claus pots for our annual Art Club sale. Every day in December was spent throwing, sculpting, and painting the popular Santa Claus pots. The lovable Santas were the Art Club's one claim to fame. Every year more pots were sold; in fact this year we were struggling just to fill all the advance orders that had been made.

We had finally filled our quota and began to look forward to the following day when we would celebrate our accomplishment. The next morning, I woke up early and got ready to leave for school. Breathing fog as thick as thunderclouds, I scraped the hard ice off my windshield. It was cold that morning, a terrible cold that went to the bone. Teeth chattering like Spanish castanets, I turned the ignition. With a shriek of pure agony, my car tried to start. "Great," I thought. "My pile of junk picks the perfect day to die." After quite a bit of pleading on my part, my car finally started, and I eased it out of the driveway, sliding on the layer of ice on the road. I carefully made my way to Route 100, where I expected the usual rush of speeding cars. When I reached the top of the hill, I looked to the left. Surprised, I then looked to the right.

The highway was empty. My throat suddenly fell to my stomach. Something was terribly wrong.

I couldn't tell you how long I sat at the top of the hill, hoping to catch a glimpse of even a single passing car. I slowly rolled down my window. The cold air penetrated through the window, wrapping around my neck like a scarf, kissing my nose and ears like a lover. In the distance, I could hear the shriek of sirens cutting through the air like a hot knife through butter. Filled with dread, I slid off the hill and finished my ride to the school.

Fearing the worst, I walked to my gym class, where I could catch snatches of conversation. "accident..." "dead...I can't believe it..." "Route 100..." "who was it?...I haven't seen Jenna yet today...oh my god..." I was quickly given the details. Someone had been killed in a terrible accident near the school, but no one knew who had been involved. Everyone was convinced that it was his or her missing friend that had been in the accident. Before long the class of sixty-six girls were mourning their assumed dead friend that hadn't shown up to class yet. When it was finally announced that Mr. Kuhn was dead, everyone was relieved that it wasn't a best friend, a boyfriend, or someone else they loved. Everyone, that is, except for a select few.

One by one, those few individuals who had cared for him numbly walked out of their classes toward the art room. When I walked into the dark art room, I was struck by the chill in the air. Looking around the room, I could see the tear-streaked faces of my friends staring back at me. We had nothing to hold us together any longer. We were once again alone. The friendships we had formed in that room were broken with the impact of the crash, and we had lost the sticking power as a group that Mr. Kuhn had given us. This was something we felt we had to deal with alone.

Deemed unable to handle the tragic news, my friends and I were escorted to the "Rap Room," where upset people were sent to talk with overeager guidance counselors. The counselors, excited with the chance to finally prove their therapeutic abilities, tried to make us feel better by forcing us to talk about the accident. We sat alone, rocking back and forth, each body a separate sphere of life, ears closed, eyes closed, minds closed. We refused to talk. After quite a long period of numbed silence, a counselor pulled a white stuffed seal from the closet. "Hug the seal," she urged us, wrapping our limp hands around the seal. "The seal will make you feel better." The seal fell to the carpeted floor, and no one picked it up. I focused my eyes on the white fur and slowly let them fall out of focus, staring at the blur of white. Norm suddenly picked up the seal and smashed it against the wall and stalked out of the room. Our eyes lifted and followed him out of the room, and then moved to the stunned counselors. Frustrated, the counselors gave us permission to leave the school.

We randomly piled into cars and slowly drove to Denny's Restaurant. We ordered the first thing that came to mind. Silently, we pushed the food from one side of the plate to the other, mixing together the food, mashing it with our forks. Suddenly a

smile flashed across Sue's face. "How's the Styrofoam business?" she sadly asked. "Light," I whispered, starting to laugh. That joke was the cue for many more. It has always been said that laughter is the best medicine. I have never laughed as hard as I did that afternoon. Looking around me at my circle of friends, I saw smiling faces and interlocked fingers. We were one again. We could make it through this.

The days that followed were terrible. Our loss was discounted by those that did not understand him. The school seemed to immediately forget his existence at all. A year before, a different, well-liked teacher had passed away. In the weeks that followed, there were countless tributes and scholarships in his memory. After Mr. Kuhn's death, his name was never mentioned again. My family debated over whether the car accident was his fault, and the other students seemed completely unfeeling because they did not know him the way we did. What no one understood was that a small group of outsiders had lost something invaluable to them: their trusted friend and mentor.

A few days after Christmas, the funeral was held for Mr. Kuhn. We planned to meet at Norm's house where we could all go to the funeral together. We arrived at his house in small groups. There were over twenty of us who had shown up at his house, and we sat together in a nervous hush. Finally, everyone was there, and we drove to the church. Bundled in scarves and mittens, we rushed up the steps to the door of the church. I threw open the door, and was startled to see a hall crowded with people waiting to talk with the widow. Squeezing into the doorway, we looked around. We were greeted with a hundred familiar faces from school. People we didn't realize cared about Mr. Kuhn had come to give him his final respect. Eyes glowing, hearts warm, we hugged each other. We considered this a well-deserved compliment to Mr. Kuhn.

After meeting with the widow, and giving her the flowers we had all chipped in to buy, we walked up the steps to where the ceremony would be held. I cannot remember the words that were spoken that night. I could barely hear them over the sobs and sniffles coming from everyone around me. At the end of the ceremony, the minister told us that Mr. Kuhn's widow wanted us to sing one of his favorite songs together instead of a religious hymn. We all broke out into "We Saw Three Ships Come Sailing In." All tears stopped; all sobs ceased as we came together and sang the Christmas tune arm-in-arm.

After the long Christmas break, we returned to school. Wanting to help however we could, we decided to clean out his room. Armed with sponges and buckets of soapy water, we lovingly scrubbed at the clay covering the room. We swept the floor and washed out the kiln. Hours later, we stepped back and looked at the room. Sparkling clean, it was ready for the new teacher. The room was no longer Mr. Kuhn's, but no one could ever take his place in the room. It was our final good-bye to room 216.

Ms. Stuluka was chosen as the new art teacher. She was hard and uncaring. She did not inspire art, but helped students plan their art. Art is one of the most spontaneous ways of expressing yourself. Planning your art on paper stifles all creative energy.

She felt threatened by our constant presence, a reminder of the exceptional teacher who had preceded her. Immediately after her arrival, the school closed the art room to anyone not enrolled in an art class during that time slot. If you were not enrolled in a class, there was a fee to enter the art room, and a charge for all materials used.

I had spent many years coming to his room. In his room I met my best friend. It was in that room I created some of my most significant pieces of art. Room 216 was the most important room in the building to us. Suddenly we were faced with not only the death of our trusted friend and teacher, but also the loss of the only place where we could come together as friends.

The late bell loudly announced the beginning of classes. My friends slowly scattered towards their classes. As I stood outside the closed door, I could smell the wax just beginning to warm up for the day and hear the replacement teacher beginning her lecture. The radio had been permanently silenced. As I looked through the frosted door at the blurred images inside, I knew that the door would be closed to me forever.

Beth Bertram
Crayola Masterpiece

Swords of imagination
prepare to pierce the pages
of my new scribble pad.

Soldiers salute at attention,
anticipating brilliant battle,
eager to bloody the ivory sheets.

Vivid cloaks of scarlet
red and midnight blue
strangle each slender form.

Vicious in vibrant colors,
armed with shimmering, stamped
shields of Binney & Smith,

the recruits release their rage
trailing tangerine, wild strawberry,
and dandelion-yellow streaks.

Torn and tattered,
the 96 weapons of my genius,
dulled with each creative whirl.

John McKnight
Candy-Coated Country

Smelling sweet sugar smells
Conjures up Candyland
Playing hours and hours.
And then,
I'm propelled down,
Yellow gum drop f

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Bumping and bouncing,
Toppling toward a blue-green
Pool of Jell-O.

I try to swim, but I'm s

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Will I drown in my candy paradise?

No!

Rapidly, a reddish-rose Gummy-Yummy Bear
Thankfully tosses a rainbow rope to rescue me.

Phew!

"Have a sunny gummy day," he cheerfully cheers

And disappears.

I jig off the jelly Jell-O

Like a wet M&M after a color-styling swim,
And fasten the candy-buttons on my shirt,

Until I hear a musical melody.

Hand to ear,

I hear,

"N-E-S-

T-L-E-S,

Nestles makes the very best...

Chocolate."

I start to sing along.

Without warning,
Sugar-covered creatures scurry around me:
Red and yellow worms,
Multi-colored Gummy-Yummy Bears,
Candy-cane carnivores,
Delicious Double-Dipped Ducks, and
White-chocolate rabbits,
Laying Cadbury eggs,
All sing along in a luscious lullaby.
Crooning our candy chorus,
In sugary symphony,

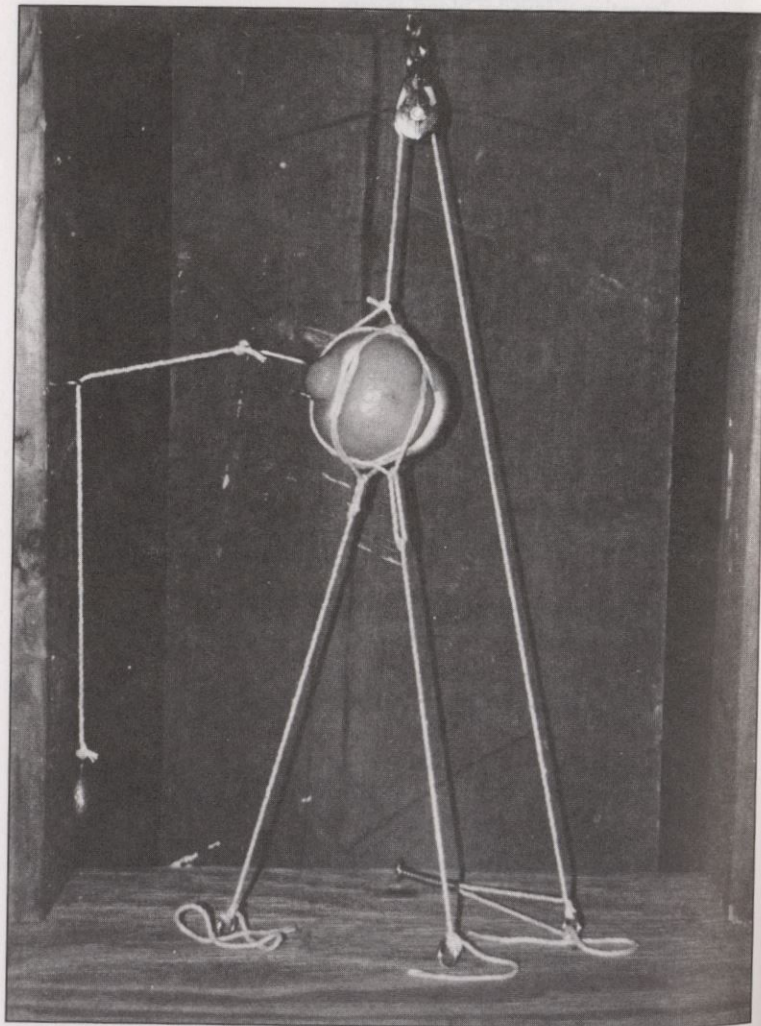
I
slip
back
to a
CVS
candy
aisle.

"Don't even consider candy," Mother calls,
"They'll just give you zits."
But I don't care.
Half-listening,
I hop away,
Having a sunny-gummy day,
Humming hymns of choice chocolate.

Beth Bertram

Tea

How dare you untuck me
from my peaceful slumber
in the envelope I call home?
Impatience invades blood-thirsty
fingers as you poke and prod
microwave buttons.
Saliva stolen
from sink's oasis
whirls in haste
becoming my abyss
of scorching death.
Terrified, I tremble.
Blinding scarlet lights
flash uncontrollably.
Grasping the vessel of my demise,
squeezing, steeping,
jerking and plunging
me into the steaming pit below.
Blood flows unhindered,
tainting the pleasure you desire.
Brought to your lips,
my insides removed,
body disposed,
I pounce as smouldering embers
and burn your tongue!



Nathaniel A. Thomas

Wounded

Do you think I need be treated as a child?
Simply due to wails and screams
from my mouth
as at the dinner table
(amid angry peas and furious
potatoes)
I am my deepest wants
denied?
I desire but a sweet drop of
(purified) [mineral]
water
in the flaming depths
of my own private
Hell.

Leave me be
amid the dirty
(dinner plates)
thoughts, you ungrateful, once-
beloved.
I am not alone, silent though I am
in face of your truths.

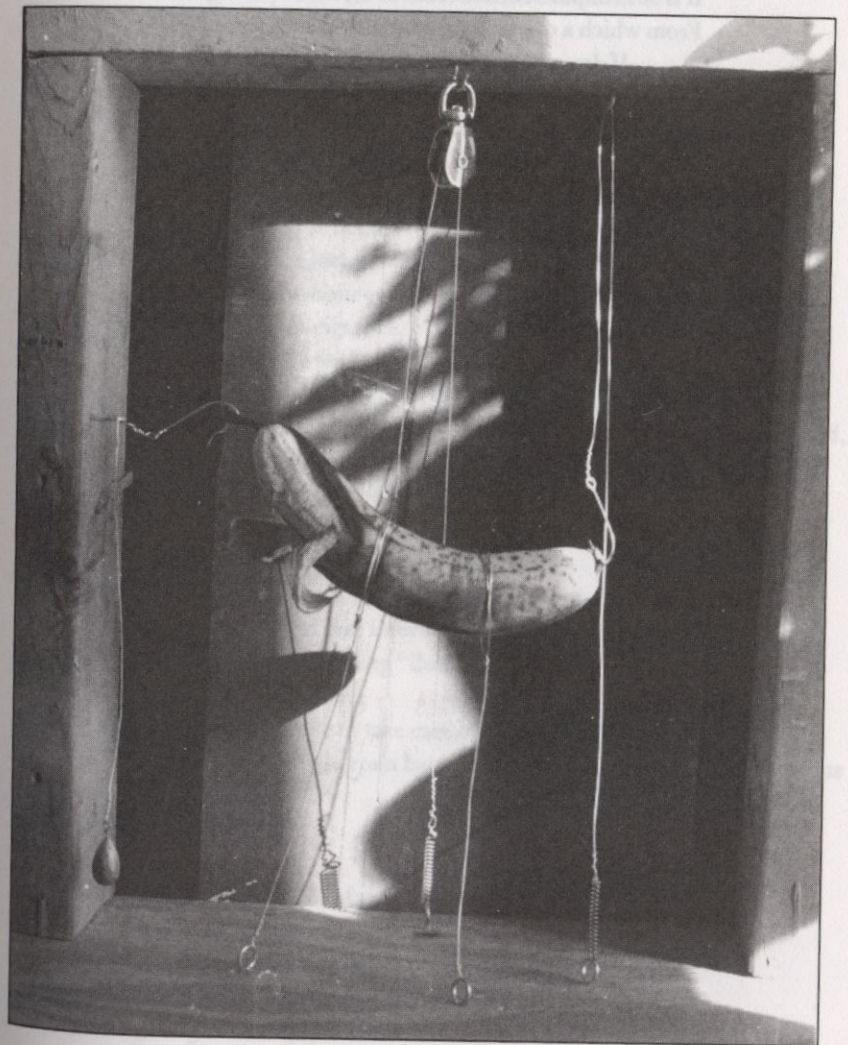
Love has played itself out and
I, gazing down
(carrot cubes float in sauces, cherry)
at your missing presence,
frame an absent picture.
Room for bitterness
(radishes)
abounds.

Not a seemly or proper thing
is it to be bitter,
but with pride, being
harsh and haughty,
I will stare you down
(potato eyes)

I will laugh you
plain away.

So forgive my table outbursts.
At times even coldest
(colder than ice cream, butternut)
pride gives no veil against
the agony of one forsaken
(like those unripe bananas).
I am not a child,
I can hate as no one knows,
I can love as
no one dares.

I will live in ever hope,
never cry
(as over ice-cold fresh milk).



Carrie Dittler
Of Dying Pomegranates

It is a question of rite, elementary seeds,
On which the sparrow may choke in greed—
 If starved too long;

It is sold in passion, the sorrow of gain,
From which a dream shall weep in vain,
 If dreamt too long;

It is a sacred gift from distant lands
That shatters in thy very hands
 If held too long;

It is the coldest prison, a cowardly sin,
A fire lost to frozen winds
 If quelled too long.

Miles

It is...

closing my eyes and seeing you,
waking up to my dog licking me in the face,
hearing that song in my head,
a cop spilling coffee in the car on a high-speed chase,
talking to my mom for the first time in a month,
forgetting where I locked up my bike,
staring at a candle that just won't quit,
getting that late night phone call,
going to class on time for a change,
listening to the sound of Edie Brickell's voice,
finding out that the kid who disgusts you is actually pretty cool,
folding laundry at home,
getting that first kiss,
surviving a four-hour game of RISK,
savoring the last cigarette,
searching for Vivien Leigh,
tasting the question mark Dum Dum,
realizing that I should never have turned my back before going to bed,
enjoying a cold beer with my best friend,
anticipating that pop quiz,
hearing Mexico calling,
warming up in my oldest sweater,
devouring macaroni and cheese at three in the morning,
talking to that girl that I never thought I'd talk with,
watching and rewatching "Bueller's Day Off,"
finding my meal card,
not even being able to take care of a Chia Head,
having a prof who keeps a batting average for a semester that she treats
 like a season,
saying good-bye,
wasting time,
living the month of May,
reading Murrow,
counting Halley's spots,
strolling in a four-year-old pair of Vans,
gazing at an empty wallet.

It is my life....and you can't have it!

Derek Hoyman

5:30 AM

She lay beside me,
Body relaxed,
Eyelashes dusting her cheek.
Her back, to me, and softly
I snuggle against her.
One arm,
Over and around her, while
In her sleep, she holds it there.
Clutching it to her, like a
Child's stuffed toy.
Each breath, carrying me
To the heights and depths
Of her slumber.
And my other arm
Has disappeared,
Beneath the solid weight
Of her head. Her hair,
In a halo, spreads out,
Covering both arm
And pillow.
And she sleeps on,
unaware. Not knowing
That I am awake, watching her.
Not knowing that I am
Memorizing the moment
So that later,
When she's gone,
I will be able to recall
And remember
the weight of her head,
And imagine that it still
Rests upon me.

John McKnight

Dawn's Last Light: a Sestina

Slouching on an old wooden porch chair, and gazing far into the blue-
ness of my soul, I'm flooded with waves of memories that began in this
house
with my childhood. When at dawn's first light,
I scampered to awaken adults. It was cool then to say "cool."
But the seemingly endless game-engaged days no longer remain
within me, and childhood innocence fades away
into rebellious days when I ran away
from the adults I once awakened. Now pictured in a blue
Easter suit, said to be "missing" on the remains
of milk containers' carcasses. Cracking up in a crack house,
not knowing where I was or who, but feeling cool
as nameless friends took a hit of my light.

Until by early morning light,
Dawn came and took me away
to the empty rooms with the cool
white hospital walls and blue
dressed women. It was Dawn who convinced me to return to this
house.
The wetness on my shoulder from Mother's shirt. Sobbing to this day
remains.

The rattle of rusty church bells remains
ringing in my ears. On a day of perfect sunlight
I married Dawn, the one, like Moses in the desert, that led me to this
house.
The one glorious day when her father gave her away.
Me, her husband, dressed in dark-blue.
She made me feel the epitome of cool.

We shared every hot day and cool
night together. Her face, tattooed to my eyes, remains
in my thoughts always. I recall her lying seductively in blue
satin, with me staring into her face. The glow from her face like a
night light
shining into my eyes, blinding me and blowing me away.
I enter her private house.

Feeling fine up till the day when returning to this house
I find her lying not in satin but in the cool
coldness of death. Like an abused child, in that instant, she is taken
away
from me. Burned, I keep her final remains
on the mantle for me to see. I yearn for her to leave the urn and re-
light
the fire within me. But she doesn't and never will, leaving me blue.

Sitting outside this house on an old wooden porch chair, with a cool
breeze blowing me back to days away, I stare at the remains
of sun's stretched smile and see Dawn's last light surrendering all to
the nightly blue.



Amy Linn
Angel Unaware

She tiptoes into the room
wrapped in cotton white,
soft fingers gently glide
down my cheek,
leaning over me
whispering,
“Are you asleep?”
Her touch quickens
my heart, pulls
me from my childhood
dreams.

A strand of dark hair
falls before her
luminous face;
her smile is pure.
She smells of soft soap
and spring rain.
I am breathless.

Hard liquors and stale smoke
linger at the bar
where she broke her
date with Jack Daniels
tonight.

Tucking the covers
around my shoulders,
she snuggles me
in tight, places
a peaceful kiss on my
forehead for safekeeping.

Then waltzes away
weaving moonbeams
in the thin air.
A dank shadow
is hiding
under one wing.

I want to hold her
forever.

Derek Hoyman
Young Love

You know, the longer I live in this world, the more I realize that I don't understand it. At all. And do you know what lies at the core of my confusion? Women. I've lived around them for nearly twenty years and, I admit, I still don't know diddly. Take the other day, for example. After nearly two and a half months, I finally worked up the nerve to compliment this girl...but, as usual, I said too much. I told her that she was cute. Not a bad start—one of those nice, overused, non-intimidating compliments—but did I stop there and just accept the fact that I had said enough? No, that would have been too simple; instead, I plunged blindly on and added the words “...like my niece.” Well, that was a mistake because right away she wants to know how old my niece is.

“Three.”

And it's all downhill from there....what started out as an innocent compliment has just backslid into an insult. Unintentional, but an insult nonetheless. And now this girl thinks that I'm saying that she's cute, but only in a three-year-old sort of way. And basically the message that I'm getting is that even if we were both three-years-old and stuck in the same playpen at the same daycare center, she STILL wouldn't talk to me. And now I wonder if I'll ever understand women—or at least learn how to compliment one without her thinking that I'm implying she wears Minnie Mouse underwear or something like that. It's amazing how much trouble a compliment can get you into.

Anyway, when did all of this get so confusing? It was so much easier when we were all in the third grade. Back then, the boundary lines were clearly drawn and everyone knew the rules: boys hate girls, and girls hate boys. The girls sat on one side of the room, drawing up divorce papers for Barbie and Ken, and the boys sat on the other, frying bugs on the windowsill with magnifying glasses out of Cracker Jack boxes. And if anyone dared cross to the other side of the room, they were deemed an outcast and ridiculed. Yep, it was a lot easier then; girls and boys just didn't mix. Well, that's not *entirely* true. It was perfectly okay for a boy to chase a girl around the playground with a half-dead frog, just as long as he didn't actually catch her—that would involve touching. And if he *did* catch her, she could always fall back on every girl's secret weapon.... “If you even *think* about touching me with that filthy frog, I'll *kiss* you!”

ArggHHHhhh!

Well, there's not a nine-year-old boy alive who actually wants to be kissed by a girl, and he wastes no time in getting the hell out of there. But now that I think about it, I doubt that there's a nine-year-old girl alive who would really kiss a boy. In fact, she'd probably rather kiss the dead frog, but she can still make the threat, and when you're a third-grade boy, you don't waste time thinking about whether she really means it; you just get as far away as you can.

And then something weird happens. Around the time that we boys hit fifth grade, we decide that we *like* girls. They still hate *us*, of course, but that's just a technicality—we're in love! And suddenly we don't mind being trapped beneath the monkeybars by fifteen giggling girls, and it's not long before the girls start running slower and deciding that they *want* to be caught, and the frogs get replaced by handfuls of crumpled daisies and dandelions. And the threat of a kiss is no longer a threat but a trophy. And then, at the ripe age of eleven or twelve (or twenty), a boy gets up enough nerve to compliment a girl:

"You look really nice today."

"You think I'm fat, don't you?"

"No, I said...."

"No, it's alright, go ahead and say it; you think I'm a fat greasy hog."

"No..I think you're...beautiful!"

"Oh, shut up!"

"No really, I think you're cute!"

"Arggh! Why don't you just call me a three-year-old!"

See? You just can't win....it's like a rollercoaster; the best thing to do is close your eyes and scream....



Boyd A. Ulmer
Promiscuous

There he stood. The man who accused me of sleeping with his wife. His eyes met mine, and I could see the fire burning behind them. He despised me, this man.

I had told him many times before that I had certainly not ever slept with his wife, and, furthermore, that he should stop harassing me.

He saw me coming up as he was going down, and he stopped me, stopped me right there on the ragged steps that led to my place on the second level.

"Why did you sleep with my wife?" He asked for the trillionth time.

"I didn't. I did not sleep with her last week, and my story hasn't changed." I made sure my eyes never left his.

"She told me she met you at the café down on Fairview Street. She told me you two had coffee and then came back to our place and made love. Several times." His color had changed. He was livid.

"No. I don't know what your wife is trying to do to me, but I've never ever slept with her." I was growing tired of the game he and his wife were trying to play.

He clenched his fists.

"I'm going to kill you, you know." He was the shade of burning lava.

"I suppose you'll have to, because I'm not going to confess to having committed adultery with your wife."

"Just watch yourself. And stay away from my wife." With that, he stormed down the stairs and was gone.

I guessed he'd go buy some arsenic or maybe a pistol with which to snuff me out. Oh, well. There was always the hope that he'd come to his senses.

The next day, I was sitting in the same infamous café near the town library, when, out of nowhere, the man's wife (did she have a name?) came in the door. She sauntered over to one of the corner tables and sat down, signaling to one of the waiters that she needed a menu. From what I'd heard, she'd been in the café enough to know what was served by heart. But, then again, who was *I* to say?

She made several rounds with her eyes, sizing everything (and, most likely, *everybody*) up that inhabited the small eat-in. She made a quick glance my way, smiling demurely as her eyes caught mine. Just as quickly as she had seen me, she looked away. I shook my head, unimpressed with her coyness.

One of the waiters (a handsome young fellow) came over to her table, nearly stumbling over his own two feet as he approached her. She giggled girlishly, and flipped a handful of her endless locks of hair over her shoulder. The waiter threw back his head with great exaggeration and laughed at his own silliness. *Oops, look what I almost did*, his manner seemed to say. It was really affecting my appetite, so I looked down at my plate for a bit. My eggs had grown cold while I watched Mrs.

Mysterious and Mr. I'm So Clumsy, so I pushed the eggs aside, tossed a couple of fives on the table, and left. I saw her look after me as I left, while the waiter yammered on about nothing.

I enjoyed living in the small downtown apartment complex that I inhabited. There was nothing really *wrong* with it; it was just that, sometimes, the people who lived around me rattled my already frail nerves.

I was thinking about this very subject when I had my experience with the man from downstairs—you remember, the one who blamed me for ruining his love life. I mean, really. I hadn't even had a girl of my own for years. Let alone had time to sleep around the apartment building.

Do you remember when I mentioned that Mrs. What's-His-Name frequented that little café down the street? Well, when I said frequented, I meant just that—*frequented*. There was a whole lot more about her that I feel ashamed talking about, but, since I've started, I might as well finish.

This woman had a way about her that struck lust into the hearts of weaker men and hatred into the heart of her husband. She tried to attract every male creature under the age of fifty—sometimes even while her husband was present. Why he never left her is amazing, even to me. I often tried to figure these people out, but it was to no avail. Some things (or, more specifically, people) just refuse to be logically explained.

I tried my best not to give Mrs. What's-His-Name a chance to trap me, but she nearly did anyway. I was coming out of the tiny grocery store that sat meaningless and insignificant in the center of the shopping mall down the street from the apartment building, when I saw her. She didn't see me immediately, and I was grateful for this. I hurried my pace, trying to make my way to my car before she saw me. Too little, too late. She cornered me as I was fumbling around for my keys.

She came towards me, emanating some sort of animalistic sensuality that I could almost *feel*. She smiled, and I was trapped. She came up to me and I caught the enrapturing fragrance of her perfume. It was like some poison that evil queens might have used to bring their disobedient subjects into submission.

She whispered something indecipherable in my right ear, and I felt the paper sack of groceries that I had purchased slip from my grasp. It fell to the pavement, splitting down the side, spilling my produce, milk, and eggs onto the ground. I couldn't move. I was carved in stone, motionless. She caressed my chest, my face, my hair. I was nearly faint when I shook my hand at her and jumped into my car. I fled down the street to my apartment, forgetting all about my fallen groceries. My heart was palpating thunderously in my chest. I needed a nap.

After that, I understood what the man from the downstairs apartment was worried about. I discovered that his name was Brian DeWall. That made the mystery woman Mrs. DeWall. Well, Mrs. DeWall seemed to be the most forward, and, from what I heard, sexually insatiable woman that existed on the planet. Well, at least in our apartment building.

Mrs. Brian DeWall never came on to me again, not in the apartment building, and not in the grocery store parking lot either. I had begun to wonder why she hadn't been around the apartments anymore, but I didn't have to wonder for long. I guess that death always keeps a lot of people from being as promiscuous as they would like to be.

Suzanne DeWall died on the second day of February, three weeks before she and Mr. DeWall's fifth wedding anniversary. Only a few people (mostly family) came to the small viewing, and even fewer came to her funeral. I guess I really didn't understand the scope of Mrs. DeWall's field-playing. I was told by several people in the building that she had been seen with the landlord, the mailman, and even the old Chinese shopkeeper down the street. I was beginning to realize why she had passed on so early (she had been only twenty-seven). I never learned what the official cause of death was, but I heard enough from my nosy neighbors. I walked away from Mrs. DeWall's funeral that freezing day in early February wondering why she had wanted *me*. And, of course, being thankful she hadn't succeeded. I never liked hospital food, anyway. All those IVs and needles and drugs and peeing in a cold metal thing didn't appeal to my sense of home either. I walked home that day perversely thinking what she had looked like when she died. I could almost see her bruises, her pale skin, her emaciated body (which had, I knew well, once been quite beautiful).

If I were Aesop, I would probably tell you that this story has a moral.

But I'm no Aesop.



Amy Linn

It Is Finished

You spilled your blood
on the floor
from your breasts seeping
through your thin night
gown,

as you grabbed onto
the stair railing, climbing
baby step by baby step,
the cancer eating you
alive as I helped
you to die with
dignity in your life?

Bitter cup by bitter cup,
you drank our lives
away, I wiped your
blood from the
hardwood floor, stained
another one of your
many crosses
for me to carry.

Nails pierce my eyes,
as your sword
slices my heart.
Where is my crown?

Tori Mello

A Different Kind of Child

Even before I was born, I was different. At least that's what Mom tells me. When I was in her stomach, I would kick the nurse's hands away whenever she tried to give my mom a test to see if I was okay. Feisty. That's what everybody always says.

I even decided when I would be born, and it was not the day that the doctors had planned. I came two months early, which is why my brother and sister, who were almost grown-ups at the time (he was nine and she was almost 11), weren't allowed to see me for a few weeks while I was in the bubble in the hospital.

"You looked like a monkey," they always tease me. I had hair all over my back and my ears, baby fur, my mom calls it, because my body didn't know that I wanted to be out in the world so soon. The fur went away quickly, though, and now my skin is brown like my daddy's instead of the purple it was in my newborn pictures. I have brown eyes like my daddy, too, and long straight brown hair; my brother and sister have curly blond hair and green eyes.

Mom likes to say she has three kids: one girl, one boy, and one Portugee. That's me, the Portugee, which is another word for being Portuguese, which only means that a long time ago, my relatives lived in Portugal. Actually, they lived on an island that was owned by Portugal.

I think Portugee is a funny word, even though my daddy's aunt told me never to say it. She said that's what they called her mom when she came off the boat that brought her to America. She didn't speak any English, and they called her lots of other bad names, too, but my daddy doesn't seem to mind that Mommy calls me her little Portugee.

At the end of last summer, my daddy took my sister, Beth, to College. They both told me she'd be home soon. She won't live there forever, even though she's taking enough of her stuff away with her. She gave me a big hug and told me to take care of our cat while she was gone. She looked like she would cry, so I kissed her cheek and told her not to be sad. "You'll be home soon," I said when I handed her the picture I had drawn. "Shouldn't you leave some of your things here for when you come home? You're not going away forever, you know."

Mom couldn't drive with them to college because she didn't feel too good. That happens a lot since she started taking the chemo medicine. The doctor said that if she sat in the car for too many hours, she would feel much worse.

After Beth and Daddy left, Mom went upstairs and sat in Beth's empty room. The only things she left were her bed and some stuffed animals; the TV was gone, the pillows were gone, the closet was hollow. Her basketball trophies stood on their shelf, but looked dusty. I didn't hear any of her music playing, not even softly.

Mom sat on Beth's bed, sniffing. Her eyes were red and she held one of Beth's

teddy bears very tightly under her chin. The bear only had one eye and its arm dangled behind its left leg. It had obviously been loved too much over the years. When I came in the room, she sat up straight and put the bear down, then wiped her eyes with the back of her sleeve.

"Don't cry, Mommy," I said. "She'll come home soon."

"I know. I just wish you guys didn't have to grow up so fast. I wish you all could be here with me all the time."

She pulled me to her and squeezed me until I almost couldn't speak. "You won't grow up on me, will you, Joanna?" I shook my head no. Of course, I wouldn't grow up, and even if I did, I wouldn't leave my house and my family to go far away to play basketball at college. Basketball isn't even a fun game!

I started school this year, first grade. I thought it was funny that none of the other kids in my class could read the alphabet on the wall. My mom and I have been reading to each other at night since last spring. Now we're reading a book filled with Walt Disney stories. I really like it, but Mom says that Mickey Mouse likes money too much. I think she has him confused with Uncle Scrooge McDuck on TV.

My teacher's name is Ms. Leary. She's very young, like Beth, which is another reason I don't understand why Beth went so far away to college. She could be teaching kids like me how to read the alphabet. She says she wants to write books, though, so maybe someday she can teach kids how to read her books.

Ms. Leary gave me a special box of books today after school was over. She said that I could keep them in the classroom and read to myself when the other kids are learning the alphabet and how to make the letters into words. The books she gave me look kind of silly. See Jane run. Look, Spot, look. These books seem very old to me. Nothing like my Disney stories.

Beth learned how to read before she was in kindergarten, too, so her principal let her go from kindergarten to second grade without going to first grade. Mom calls it skipping a grade, and she thinks that I should do that, too. She's a teacher for smart kids, and she says that I need to be challenged so I don't get bored with school. My principal doesn't think it's a good idea, though. I guess I'm not quite as smart as Beth was when she was my age, even though I helped her this summer when she had to learn words for college.

So I'll keep reading those books in Ms. Leary's box. Besides, I'm already bored with school.

When Beth came home for Christmas, she brought her new boyfriend. His family lived too far away so he couldn't see them for Christmas, which didn't matter much to him because he is a Muslim, which is a different kind of religion. Mom told me that when you're a Muslim, you don't believe in Jesus, which means that you don't have Christmas. So Khalil got to try something new with us that year.

Khalil's skin was even darker than mine. I asked him, are you a Portugee like me? He must have thought that was a funny word, too, because he smiled and laughed a little. His teeth were straight and white like icicles, and sometimes when he talked, I liked to just watch them and try to figure out how he made them so shiny.

Even though Khalil didn't believe in Jesus, Mom said that we had to each give him a present on Christmas morning to make him feel comfortable. Daddy gave him a nice tie; my brother, Jesse, gave him a shirt and some candy; Mom gave him a pair of slippers. My grandparents gave him a watch with a sparkly silver wristband which looked even more spiffy when he put it on his brown wrist. I gave him a book that I found in my closet about the Christmas story because I thought it was sad that he didn't know about Christmas.

Mine was his favorite present. He read it after supper. "What's your favorite part?" I asked him.

"This here," he said, and pointed to the picture of the three wise men on their camels. One of them looked just like him, with the same brown skin and curly hair. Khalil's smile was especially big and shiny. I wondered if now he believed in Jesus.

My mom had to go to the hospital this week to have an operation, and she's not allowed to go back to work for two weeks. Daddy has to call Beth at college to tell her about it.

When I went to school yesterday, I told my friends that Mom has something growing in her body that the doctors have to take out. "They call it cancer, but they can fix it," I said. My friend, Missy, told me that her grandfather had cancer and they couldn't fix it. He died.

"Yeah, but he was old," I told her. "Only old people die. They'll fix my mom and she'll be fine in a couple of weeks."

Missy's mom picked her up at school. On my walk home, I realized that Missy's mom is a lot younger than my mom, who's now 44. Does that mean she's old?

I looked up at the trees along the sidewalk. Their branches were naked and twisted like they had lived through a whole lot of wind and snow, but they look so strong, like they will live forever. My mom has lived through a whole lot of wind and snow, too, but lately she hasn't looked as strong as she did the day we moved all my furniture around in my room. Or the day she helped my daddy build our deck.

Only her eyes still look the same. The rest of her is sort of gray like the sky in winter. But her eyes are still green and glowing. That's how I know that she'll be better soon.

Last night I had a terrible dream about hospitals and doctors and gray skies. Missy was there telling me stories about her grandfather's operation. I woke up sweaty and scared, my foot hurt from kicking the wall, and my sheets were tangled around my arms. After I realized that I was safe in my bed, I grabbed my pillow and went to my parents' room.

Mom wasn't there. At first I was terrified, and I cried until Daddy picked me up and hugged me. He rubbed my hair and jiggled me up and down the way Mommy used to do when I was a baby.

"It's okay, Joanna," he whispered. "You had a bad dream. Mommy'll be home tomorrow. She misses you."

I slept next to my daddy, even though his snoring woke me up every now and then. One time I heard him talking in his sleep. "Love you, Caroline," he murmured. "Be careful. Be careful. "Caroline is my mother's name. He must miss her, too.

Today I got in a fight with Missy. I pulled her hair and everything, and called her a stupid liar. "My mom will come home today," I yelled. "You didn't need to tell me that story about your grandfather, who's old and yucky anyway."

I had to sit in the principal's office for a long time, and even though I was scared, I knew that I was right. Missy isn't even a good friend. She never wants to play kickball or jailbreak, but instead she likes to play Barbies and dollhouse. I think sometimes that she's afraid of dirt. Not me, though. I love dirt. I love to get it under my fingernails and in my ears. All the knees on my play pants have holes and grass stains in them from playing with my brother's old Tonka trucks in my yard. Mom always laughs at me and shakes her head when I come home for dinner, her little dark-eyed Portugee tomboy.

Anyway, before I left the principal's office today, she told me that she was disappointed in me. "You've always been such a good girl, Joanna. Does this have anything to do with what's going on at home with your mom?" Her eyes were sad like my stuffed basset puppy, like the eyes the people at church show me when they talk to me. What's going on with my mom? They don't need to feel sorry for me or my daddy or Beth or Jesse because my mom is going to be fine.

Mom feels better these days, but her skin is still sort of gray. One day a week she has to go to the doctor for some medicine, and when she comes home she goes straight to bed. On medicine nights, I either cook dinner for Daddy, or he takes me out for pizza. I don't really like pizza as much as I used to.

Sometimes I can hear Mom in the bathroom throwing up, but she doesn't like to let me help her. I go into the bathroom anyway.

"It's the mommy's job to take care of the kids," she tells me with a weak smile. Her eyes are always green and strong like the tops of the trees on my street.

"But you taught me how to do this," I tell her. I splash water on her face and help her wipe her eyes and nose. I don't need to hold her hair out of her face because she doesn't have hair anymore. But her eyes are so beautiful and colorful, not brown and dingy like mine. Like the dirt under my fingernails.

When I help her go to bed at night, sometimes she asks me to read to her. Even though I can't read her grown-up books yet because their words are too small on the

pages, I read to her from the Laura Ingalls Wilder books that used to belong to Beth. They're books about life on the prairie before there were cars and TVs and airplanes and chemo medicine. Everything must have been so simple then. All the kids were in one classroom, so no one worried about who could read and who should skip a grade. They just did what they could do, then moved on to more things that were a little bit harder. Young kids like me could hang around with the big kids and learn from them. That's why I miss Beth sometimes, and her friends. They always let me hang out with them, like one of the gang.

When I'm done with my story to Mom, I lie down next to her and she puts her arms over me.

"You're getting to be such a big girl, Joanna," she smiles. She smooths my hair out of my face and tells me that I need to take a bath in the morning. "You'll always be my baby, you know."

"And you'll always be my mommy," I tell her. I fall asleep next to her until Daddy carries me to my own bed.

Whenever I practice for my piano lessons, I think of my brother, Jesse, who's in high school now. He likes music and acting, which is why we get to go to all his band competitions and plays. Sometimes I laugh when I see him with all that make-up on his face when he's up on stage. He doesn't look like my brother at all—especially with his glittery blue eyes and his curly hair. His teeth are straight and shiny like Khalil's, and the make-up on his face makes them stand out even more. He doesn't look like the Jesse that gets up all mushy-faced in the morning and yells at me to get out of the bathroom.

But then when he sings, I know it's him. His voice sounds like church bells, only deeper and stronger. He loves to sing: in the shower, in his room while he combs his hair, in the car when he takes me to soccer practice, especially on the stage in front of an audience of people.

I sang a solo at church once, and my voice cracked because I was so nervous. All those eyes staring at me, nodding their heads, smiling. I knew the whole song, everyone else's verses, but when mine came up, I could only squeak it out. Nothing like Jesse's church bells.

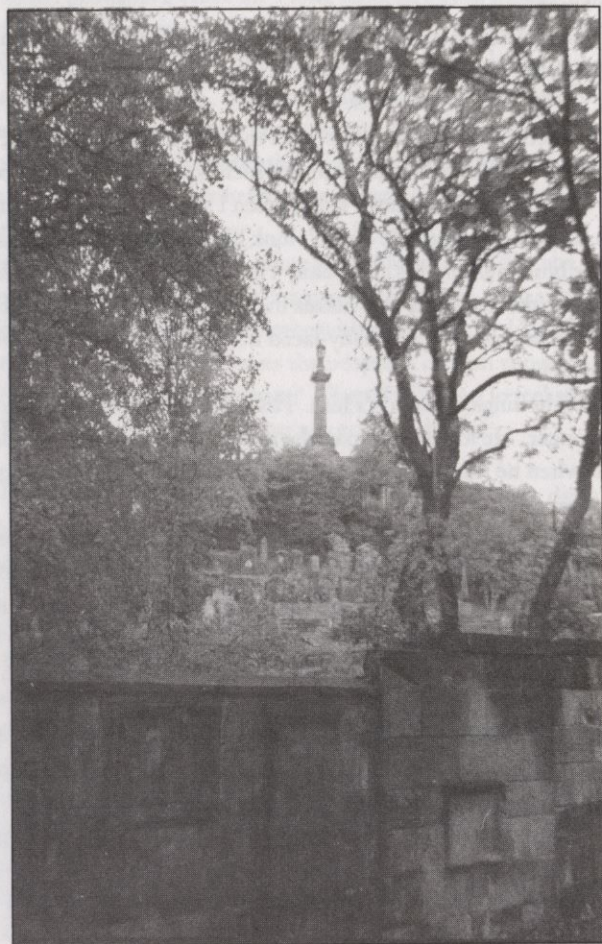
I cried when he hugged me after the service. "You did great," he said. "Why are you upset?"

"I felt like people were laughing at me," I whimpered. That was a lie. I knew no one in the church would care that my voice wasn't beautiful. But I wanted Jesse to be proud of me. I wanted to be perfect like him.

We sang to the radio in the car on the way home. Jesse held my hand the whole time, and I felt silly for crying.

I think when I grow up I'll live in this town of tall trees and old houses. I'll teach kids how to read, and I'll coach a girls' basketball team. On the weekends, I'll sing in a choir, but not one that travels too far away. My parents will probably be old then, so I'll have to stay near home. That's okay, though, because when I visit them, they will love it when I read out loud the books that Beth will write. Jesse's songs will play on the stereo all day long. At Christmas time, our whole family will get together and I'll cook the dinner. Khalil will tell us about the wise men who came to visit Jesus. Mom and Daddy will hold hands and smile at each other.

"It's too bad they had to grow up so quickly," Mom will joke. "But they have grown up to be such wonderful people," my daddy will answer. Because we're a different kind of family.



John McKnight
Across the Street

My big screen TV. The bay window in the living room. Staring across the street. That's where the dirty family lives. Their dirty faces and dirty bodies playing in the dirt. Their name is Dittman or Dirtman or something like that.

Mommy always said to stay away from their kids. Nothing but trouble she said. Nothing but trouble. Sometimes they tried to play with us. The clean kids. We would laugh at them. Laugh and laugh and laugh. Then they would start to hit us with dirty fists and spit on us from dirty mouths. One Dirtman, Johnny, whom we called Pigpen, grabbed my brother Dave's neck. Dave being the smallest.

I ran at him. Ran hard. Hit hard. Hard is how the Pigpen hit the ground. Dirty tears making clean streaks down his face.

After Mommy saw the purple marks on Dave's neck, that the clean kids later kidded were hickeys, Mommy got madder than I ever seen her before. Right to the Dirtman's house madder than ever. Very mad. I tagged behind her, unseen.

Mrs. Dirtman and my clean, mad Mommy. Screams. Yells. Not my Johnny. Not my son. Mommy using words I never heard before. Sometimes using words that us clean kids only said when no adult is around. So to not get a spanking.

Nothing but trouble Mommy says. Nothing but trouble.

Then one night from my big screen TV. Watching across the street. The sirens wailing. Mrs. Dirtman at the door. Screams. Yells. Please save my Johnny. The house is on fire. Dirty house on fire.

A crowd gathering in front of the house. Clean kids with clean parents and clean ideas. Murmuring. Talking. Proposing the fire's beginning. Dirty people they say. Dirty, dirty people.

Mrs. Dirtman. Screams. Yells. Please save my Johnny! But the sooty men in the black coats can't save him. The house fire is too big. Dirty house on fire. The clean people gawking. Pigpen cannot be saved. Dirty house on fire.

Screams. Yells. Please save my Johnny! Not my Johnny. Not my son!

Nothing but trouble Mommy says. Nothing but trouble.

Nathaniel A. Thomas
Goldilocks Enraged

Liberally dripping with bitterness,
She breezed into the space,
Wheezed her nasty words and
Spun her spidery hate.

Crawling into the cave
He daringly despaired to its depths,
Witnessing close behind
Her blissful, furious rage.

He stumbled; she pounced.
Her fangs, wet with poison, declared
Silent victory on his throat:
Vermilion cascade.

She distractedly petted his glossy
Hair, and his amazed face
Yawned back at her in disbelief.
"Oh dear, blood on my dress!" she cried.

Cruel, betraying, he crushed her heart,
And she, issuing vengeance, reimbursed him.
He lies now in eternal limestone splendor.
She roams looking for new bowls of porridge.

Eric Dalton

To Whom It May Concern

I am writing this letter with the hope that someday it will be read and that civilization will avoid the mistakes that we have made. When I was a kid, I was one of the "upper class," and when I say upper, I mean upper! Let me explain. I lived the luxury lifestyle and thought I had it bad. I had a penthouse apartment up in the clouds, robotic servants, a self-cleaning house, a Jet-Car, unlimited food and drink....I had it all. We had it all! In school they taught us that the earth had become uninhabitable because of past civilizations' mistakes using up all the natural resources and polluting the air. They told us that to escape extinction, we used our "advanced" technology and moved into floating houses high in the sky. They told us that there was nothing below us at all, that the earth had completely been eradicated by the great war. The unspoken rule was: *Never look down.*

I was content to live my little isolated upper-class lifestyle until my first year of physics in Middle School. That was when I saw the giant pillar supporting our house. I had seen it before a million times, but I couldn't stop staring. Looking around, I noticed, as if for the first time, that all of the houses were supported in this fashion, as were all the islands of land. Like Jean-Paul Sartre lost in a world I didn't understand, I allowed myself to ignore what I had seen for several years. Finally, upon graduation from high school, I couldn't avoid the truth anymore. I looked down and saw clouds, the same as I had always seen as a kid, only this time they were different.

To make a long story short, I went to the clouds and then went past them, following the great pillar that had so elegantly and efficiently supported our house. I plunged downward for what seemed an eternity; finally, the clouds parted. Nothing could have prepared me for what I saw. *People.* Thousands of them. Dark-skinned men and women by the hundreds of thousands. Some were standing in line for something, others lying indignantly in piles around fires, and others still staring in shock at me as I stared back at them. As if mesmerized, I went to them and looked into their sunken eyes. I saw past the filth and grime. I saw into the heart of a man. A human being.

Everywhere there was foul dirt: excrement on the walls, smog in the air, and hundreds of blackened calloused hands clutching at me! Without knowing it, I had descended to their level, and they were grabbing at me! Aghast, I tried to pull free, but it was futile. They had me! Their looks of shock had been transformed into looks of pure hatred. From piles of twisted metal, throngs produced wires and chains which they bound me with. They were all about me chanting in ancient languages long forgotten or abandoned and calling me what I can only imagine were the foulest of names as they spit on me and breathed their putrid breath upon me. I was led about by a chain around my neck throughout the masses of people. From my new perspective, I could see the great pillars stretching to the heavens I called home. I

was forced through reeking tunnels and over great buildings reduced to rubble by some unknown force. I passed a mammoth building humming with power and crackling with energy. The largest pillar I had yet seen extended upwards from this structure and glowed a fantastic blue. Blinking the soot from my eyes, I could make out a half dozen similar facilities. I was led past immense factories where they were apparently building the robots that we had come to take for granted.

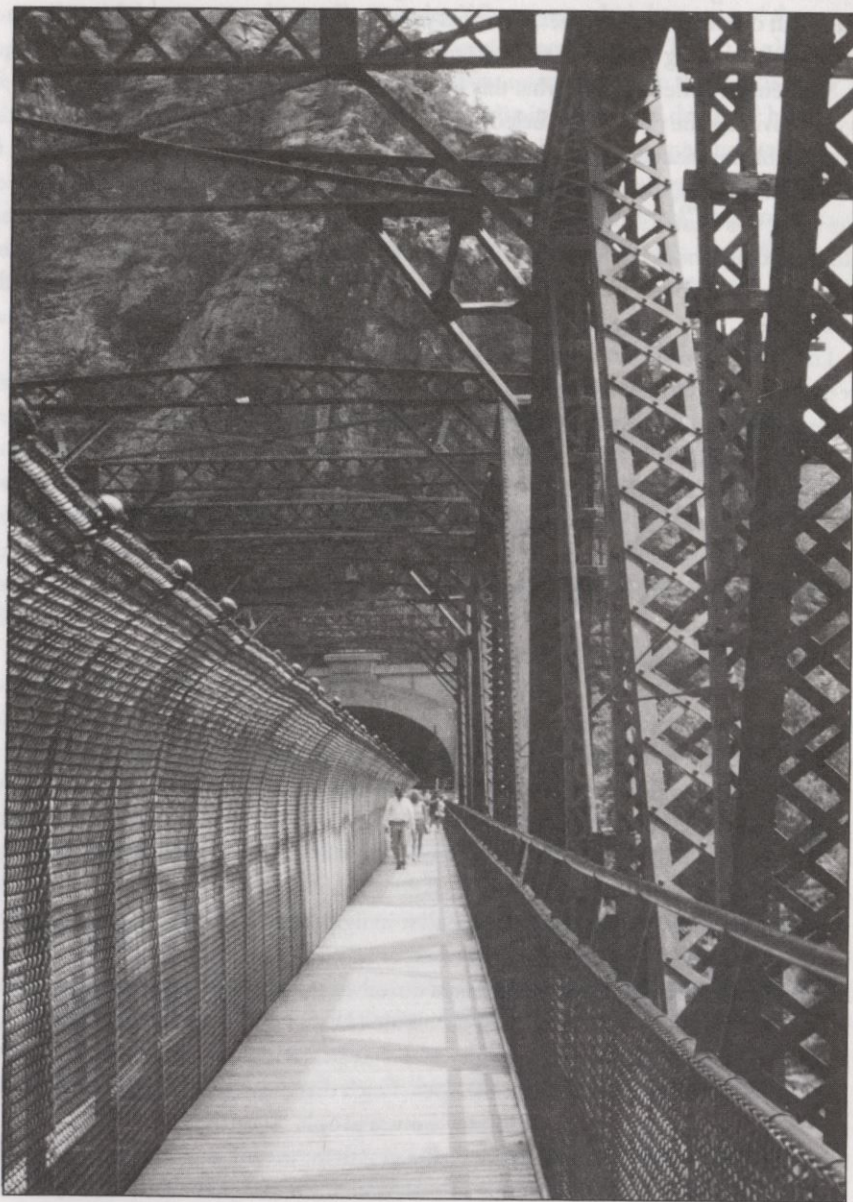
Suddenly, I came to realize what this Hell was that I saw before me. These people were providing the power that fueled our food processor. These people were responsible for making the robots that waited on us hand and foot. But why? From the depths of Hell, these men and women had constructed for us a heaven, and from the way I was treated, they didn't at all appreciate the construction business. My eyes stung, and my nose bled from the stink of the crowd, but I felt nothing. My body had gone numb and didn't feel the cruel wounds that I was sustaining. No, I was not liked or tolerated.

I came at last to an area even thicker with people. More people than I had ever seen. More people than I ever thought there could be! They were all huddled inside a huge crater looking skyward. Eventually a ship descended and robots, not unlike the ones that moved furniture for us, began tossing boxes and crates out of the ship. The crowd pushed forward and I feared I would be crushed, but I was not so fortunate—I got to see what was in the crates. Food. Generic, nutritive food tablets. The very ones that we kept around the house in case of emergencies that never came. My God, we were providing these people with food! Our "Enlightened Culture" was aware of the situation and supported it!

With that thought, the truth dawned on me. It was not we who supported this; it was this that supported us! I had never given a single thought my entire life to where all the energy we consumed was coming from. It wasn't all solar. I had never wondered where all the factories were that made our Jet-Cars, conveyor walkways, and robots. These people were our *slaves!* They worked, and died, sustaining our man-made heaven in exchange for food!

My world crumbled around me. My great pillars fell, and I toppled from what I considered civilization to the harsh truth below. We had not only caused this situation, but forgotten about it. The greatest indignity that had befallen these people was not the forced labor, terrible conditions, or starvation. It was the total abandonment. We had allowed, no...we had *forced* ourselves to disregard those it had already forsaken. Justice is indeed blind, and we blinded her! I fell to my knees, weeping. Soon I was tossed into one of the empty "food" crates, where I know I will spend my last few wretched hours. With my laser pen, I etch this message on my prison wall in the hopes that someday it will be found. Future people on earth, do not make the mistakes that we did. Do not create a Hell on earth for the billions so that a few million can live in blind ignorant bliss. Learn from my message so that someday there can be a heaven on earth instead of in the clouds.

Elroy Jetson



Beth Bertram

Fastened to Your World

A paper clip, desperately
clutching its insides,
longing to maintain its luster,
I fastened myself to your world.

I clung to you tightly,
a spiral holding together
the pages of your being.

My erasable etchings now obsolete,
you carved your convictions into me,
a pen blotting my mind.

I was abused and battered,
a rubber band stressed
beyond its breaking point.

So I unhinged and released you
from the bruising staples
binding us together,
making a memo
that my heart was broken.

Max Mykhailenko
English Major

If your major is English,
You'll find yourself in the paws of
Very boring explications,
Parenthetical citations,
Manuscripts and paraphrases,
And symbolic mazes.

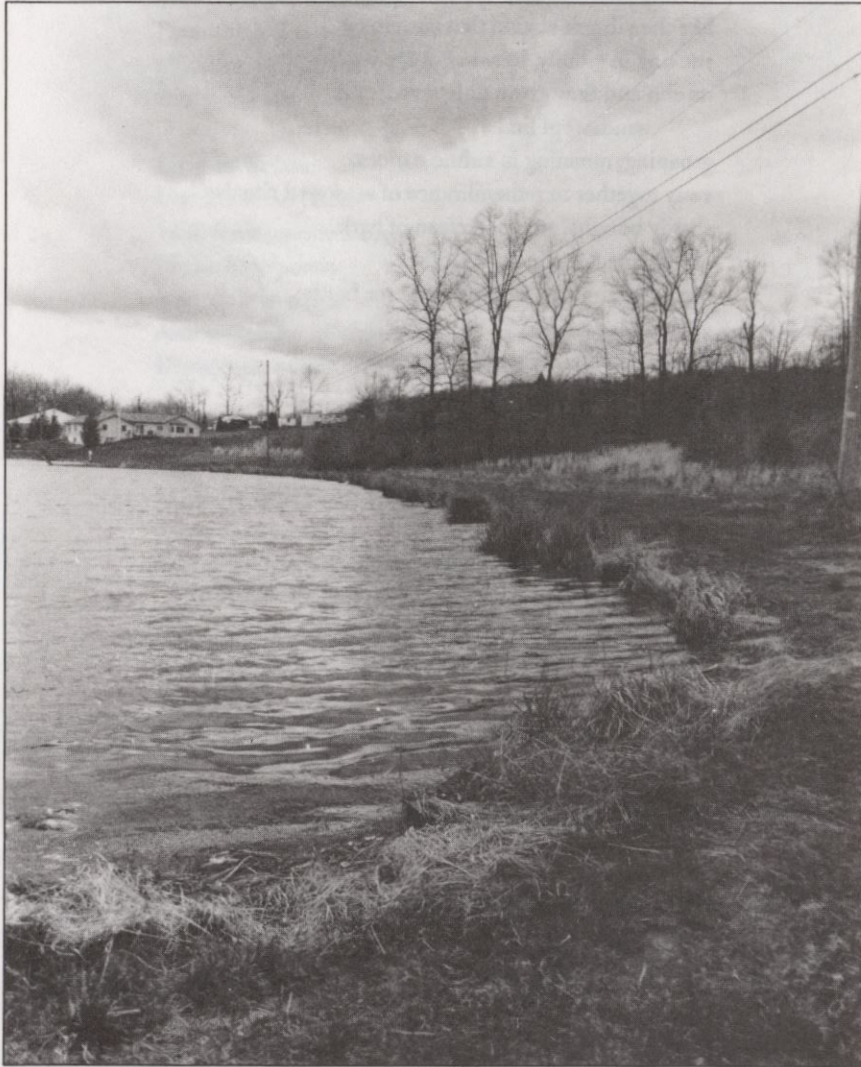
Literature class:
Unreliable narrators
With their innocent eyes
Recite lyric poetry
And write in italics
And search for motivation
Using their omniscience....

Folksingers
Take footnotes in class
In free verse
And compose songs
from a listener's point of view.

Protagonists
Walking on their pyrrhic feet
realize their imagery
In tragic irony and sarcasm.
They recite only stressed syllables in references
And replay their endless farce in the Elizabethan theatre.

Danielle Resnick
oh...

the forest breathes
life within its breast immeasurable,
beating passionately,
like the vibrant stream that sustains it,
sucking in vitality, blowing out mortality,
its ebb and flow grow, unfettered;
windswept limbs
groaning, moaning in subtle dances,
sway together in remembrance of seasoned rituals;
sturdy boughs, stripped clean of bark,
crack, smack against each other
like stags' antlers colliding in fierce battle;
these wood,
graceful in their splendor,
mutely perform a symphony,
changing tones of droning silence
into wisplike tendrils of gentle harmonies;
featherlight trills descend, lightly parting the air,
undaunted by time or reason;
centuries of memory,
suspended within the whispers carried by windsong
and chanted softly in a forgotten language,
drift wistfully amongst the dew.



Mark L. Hudson

Our Stream

"That little stream don't got no fish in it" was what the local outfitters told my brother and me when we asked them about the stream three miles up the road. We knew why this guy thought what he did. About thirty years ago, there was an oil spill that had polluted the stream and killed everything that lived in it. An oil pump had broken and sprayed oil in the air like the Old Faithful Geyser; the oil then ran down the side of the mountain and into the stream. Everyone stopped fishing the stream, and no one gave it a second chance. It was my Uncle Dick who never gave up on this stream and started taking my brother back through the woods to the stream ever since my brother was old enough to fish. They would go out and come back with nothing except on occasion a little eight-inch brook trout. My brother and uncle were always extremely excited when they arrived home with a fish; no one else in the town thought there were fish in the stream, and my brother and Uncle Dick had proven there were. My uncle passed away before I was old enough for him to take me fishing. My brother, Eric, took over the role as guide and now takes me back fishing and instructs me.

On one of our trips up to Grama's soon after my uncle had passed away, my brother, dad, and I were fishing the stream. My brother caught a nineteen-inch brown trout. The trout was so huge it looked like a monster to me. It was very fat, so fat that I couldn't place my whole hand around it, and the trout had a big hooked jaw with two rows of bony teeth. Eric caught it under an undercut bank, which was on a sharp bend like that of the corner of a square. My brother was only twelve when that happened, and after that expedition the stream was considered "Our Stream" by family and friends.

The stream at its widest point is only as wide as a full-size pick-up truck. At its deepest point, Ronald McDonald could stand with his head out of the water. There is not any really treacherous water that could sweep us away in "Our Stream." The stream has trees on both sides of it, except where it flows under the road.

The stream meanders through the Allegheny National Forest, located in northwestern Pennsylvania. The forest floor is covered by a blanket of decomposing leaves and branches that fall out of trees that are taller than the dorms we live in. The trees keep it very dark, only letting through small amounts of light that look like laser beams slicing their way down from the tree tops. When we're walking through the trees, it is like we are walking on waves; we are forever going up and down little hills. It is as if we are in a little boat out in the ocean during a fierce thunderstorm.

The air around the stream is refreshing to us because we live near Philadelphia, so we don't have the cleanest air. The air always has the smell of evergreen trees and moisture, like when people say that they can smell rain coming. Even the air makes us feel good. It feels as if you are breathing a totally new kind of air, an air that is special. The feeling of moisture is always around the stream. Anything you feel is always wet

or moist, which makes everything green and not just a regular green but a fantastic bright green that stands out in our eyes.

In more recent years, my brother has taken on the role as the guide of "Our Stream." My uncle had this role with my brother, but now Eric is teaching me what to do. We take the fishing of the stream very seriously because all the trout in it are "native" or not stocked by the Fish and Game Commission. We are able to tell that the trout are "native" by the deep red spots that run along the lateral line of their bodies and the red tint on the ends of their fins. "Stocked" trout are usually just a "blah" dark brown with clear fins. They don't have any color because they breed and live in a box with hundreds of other trout. The trout always run into each other, which makes them lose their color. All fishing of "Our Stream" is done with bronze, size-eight, barbless, Eagle Claws that only have one sharp point at the end of them; the rest of the hook is just smooth metal. This is so we don't harm the fish, and if we do, it is very minimal. If we would use regular hooks, they would tear the trouts' mouths and then they would die from the sore that the hook would leave.

We now stay at my aunt's, who lives about ten minutes from the stream since my grandmother was moved into a nursing home. Now Eric and I have to drive to the stream since we aren't staying in my Grama's old house, which was right next to the stream. We now have to park on the side of a busy highway and walk back on an overgrown truck path, which leads to an old unused oil pump, but around a half mile back into the woods the path crosses the stream. This adds a little time to our trips, but we don't mind. It gives us some time to talk about which holes we are going to fish thoroughly and which holes we are just going to run through. "Today we will fish the Beaver Dam inside and out along with the 'Fern' hole," my brother tells me.

The "Fern" hole is the first big hole we come to as we walk along the stream. There are other little holes that we stop and fish, but the big trout live in the big holes, and that is what we are there to catch. The "Fern" hole is about fifteen yards long and about eight feet wide. There are rocks the height of a house on the far side of the stream that form a cliff. On the side we fish from, there are big ferns that cover the ground. When we walk through the ferns, they come up to our knees. This is the only hole on the stream where there aren't trees right up to the bank, so it is very bright there. When we walk up to the hole, it is like we walk onto a beach; the sun is so bright. There is a small break in the ferns at the bottom of the hole where a tributary flows into the stream. In the stream, there are two rocks that stick out of the water about a foot and form a teepee-like structure; the fish like to hide under them because it is dark and they can't be seen. When we fish here, we sit on our knees in the tributary behind the ferns and cast to the top of the hole. This lets the bait drift through the entire hole and past the rocks where the trout hide. Since we are in the tributary, the trout never see us.

When we finally end up at the stream and get ready to fish, we talk about each hole before we fish it. We both give our thoughts on how we should approach each hole

and then take the better of the two ideas. The best idea usually ends up being Eric's because he is much more accomplished at fishing "Our Stream" than I am. After we have arrived at our strategy on what to do, we both bait up and get ready to fish. We use night crawlers when we fish "Our Stream." We only use a two-inch section of worm which we cut off with our thumb nails. We use ultra-light spinning rods with two-pound test. This gives the fish a better chance to get away and also provides us with a better fight.

I am the one who always approaches the hole first. The approach is very important to catching fish that are easily spooked because they are not used to shadows passing over them. The trout think that the shadow is a predator trying to make them dinner. My brother has told me to crawl along the bank and hide behind some ferns, so I don't cast a shadow on the water. So I'll crawl along the bank, which is made up of rocks about the size of baseballs, and hide behind the ferns or whatever he has pointed out to me. The rocks feel like pins piercing my calves and hands as I crawl on top of them. Other times, he has told me to walk as slowly as a turtle up to a hole, so I don't disturb the water or make a lot of noise.

Next is the cast. My brother always tells me you only get one chance. Would that make you nervous? It makes me "just a little nervous." So I try my best, and sometimes when I present a great cast, I am rewarded with a tug on the other end of the line. Sometimes, I make a horrible cast, and the line ends up in one of the many tree branches that have twisted themselves into spider webs, hanging over top of the stream. When I make a bad cast, sometimes I get a second chance—other times it's over, and just because I make a good cast doesn't mean that I will end up catching anything.

My brother had caught many big, ugly fish in this stream. I, on the other hand, had not yet caught that monstrosity of a fish that I had been looking for. That little problem was conquered on our last trip to "Our Stream."

I had a feeling that something good was going to happen on that very trip and guess what? It did. We went fishing as soon as our parents gave us permission. It had rained the day before, so the temperature was very comfortable and there was also a lot of mud in the stream, which made "Our Stream" the color of chocolate milk. The sun was setting and the sky was getting dark, so I checked my watch and it read 8:45 p.m.

My brother and I had only been fishing for two hours when we decided that the Beaver Dam was going to be the last hole for the night. My brother told me to walk up stream about twenty feet from where I was because it looked like that section of the stream may have been holding a trout or two. I tip-toed up the stream very carefully so as not to make any noise. There was a little ripple that stretched the whole way across the stream about six feet above where I was standing. There was also a tree laying in the stream three feet from the other bank.

I wanted to make a cast that landed right below the ripple and within a foot of the

tree. My first cast landed right where it was supposed to, and I had a decent hit. With my brother coaching, or as I would say badgering me, I pulled back on my rod and set the hook. The fish pulled back hard and took off in the other direction. The trout pulled a little line off the reel before it stopped running. When it stopped, we saw it flash, and we knew it was a nice fish. I fought the fish in a tiring tug-of-war for about five minutes until I landed it with the blackness of the forest enclosing us. The moon shone down on us like a spotlight, and we could see red dots and the hooked jaw in the moonlight. It had large eyes, the size of dimes, because the fish was a night feeder. I had caught a twenty-inch brown trout, which put an end to my bad luck on "Our Stream." This was a great accomplishment for my brother and me. Eric had been taking me back to this stream for many years in search of this fish. The Beaver Dam was also our last unconquered hole, and it had now been conquered!

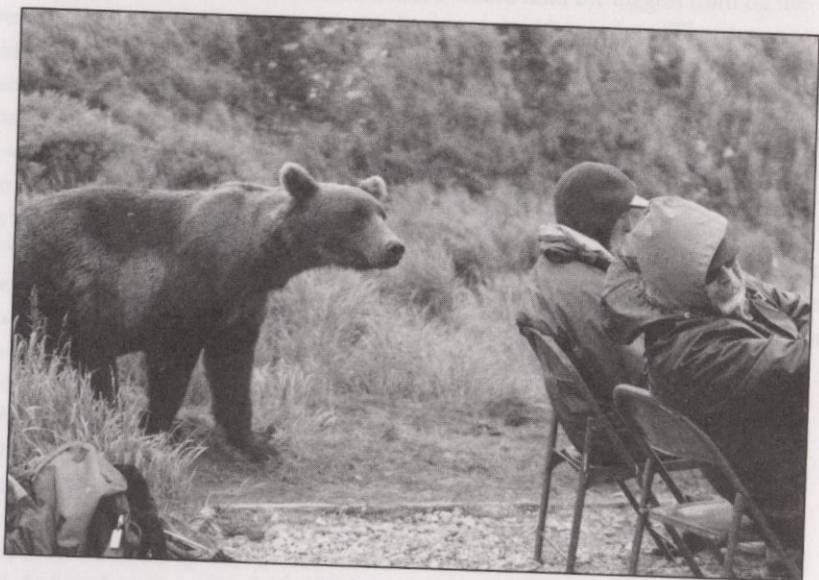
The Beaver Dam is the hole that looks like it would hold the biggest trout on the stream. This is where the stream is at its deepest and widest points. The stream splits like a "Y" at the Beaver Dam. At the point where the stream separates, there is a mess of trees, tree branches, and anything else that the beavers drag onto their house. There are trees all around the hole going right up to the bank and some even end up growing out of the bank. It is always very dark at this hole because all of the trees act like an umbrella that blocks the sunlight from shining through. When I caught my big fish, I was fishing at the top of the hole right before the stream splits.

"Our Stream" is not only a place to fish. There are many other things that we quite often see and discover while we are out on our fishing trips. I recall one of the neatest experiences my brother and I had on a trip to the stream. We were at the Beaver Dam kneeling down to see if we could spot any fish. The water was crystal clear like the spring water you buy in the grocery store. We heard a deer grunt, so we looked up and saw three deer: two bucks and one doe off in the woods. The deer were in rut, and bucks were fighting over the doe. We watched them for a long time before they made it up to the opposite bank not more than twenty feet away. The bucks started snorting at each other, and then the bucks ran off with the doe running in the other direction. We stood up and watched them run down the stream about one hundred yards before they stopped, and we could only make out the silhouette of the two deer. The two bucks actually started to fight each other; they backed up and then charged each other, locking their antlers together. After they fought for about five minutes, they ran off and we couldn't see them anymore. We also quite often see bear prints in the mud and in the sand on the stream bank, but we haven't yet seen a bear while we've been out fishing.

When we are at "Our Stream," my brother and I are at peace with each other. We don't fight or argue over stupid petty things. The stream and the woods take away our "attitudes" and make us peaceful. The woods put us both on the same level. The forest is always changing, and we don't know what to expect while we are out. We might be walking around and fall in a ditch, or one of us might get bitten by a snake

while we are trudging through high weeds. We both end up helping each other in some way or another.

My brother and I try to get up to my Grama's to go fishing as much as we can. Our first problem is that it is six hours away from our house, so it can't be a one-day trip. It has become more difficult in the past couple of years with our conflicting schedules. With him being away at college for most of the year and me having some kind of band function every weekend, we can't get together as often to go fishing. Now we don't get to fish "Our Stream" except in the summer time when we go with our parents to visit Grama and our other relatives. However, when I do go out in the woods to the stream, it does not matter if I am fishing or just sitting on a rock; I enjoy just listening to the water flow by, making its peaceful rolling sound.



Laura Wychulis

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Sleeping Bag

Rolled up in a ball
like a clenched fist.
Army green with white straps
holding the insides together,
a straight jacket.

Standing upright and alone
it's attacked from behind!
Little brother pinned the midget wrestler.

Stretched out on the grassy lawn,
it is a large green worm.
Snuggled inside on a cold night,
I am at home in warmth and safety.
Fastened to trees and hidden in morning,
no one finds me in the constructed hut.

Dad at one end, brother at the other,
they swing the zippered hammock.
I'm suddenly soaring from my trampoline!
Until it goes dark, and I'm closed in.
I can't see or breathe, and so I scream.
I escape from inside the coffin.

After a washing, the dripping leaf hangs on the line.
The wind dances, and it waves to neighbors.
As it hangs, it is my shield,
protecting me from bullets of water;
I'm at the mercy of an adolescent boy
tempted to pull the trigger and dampen me.

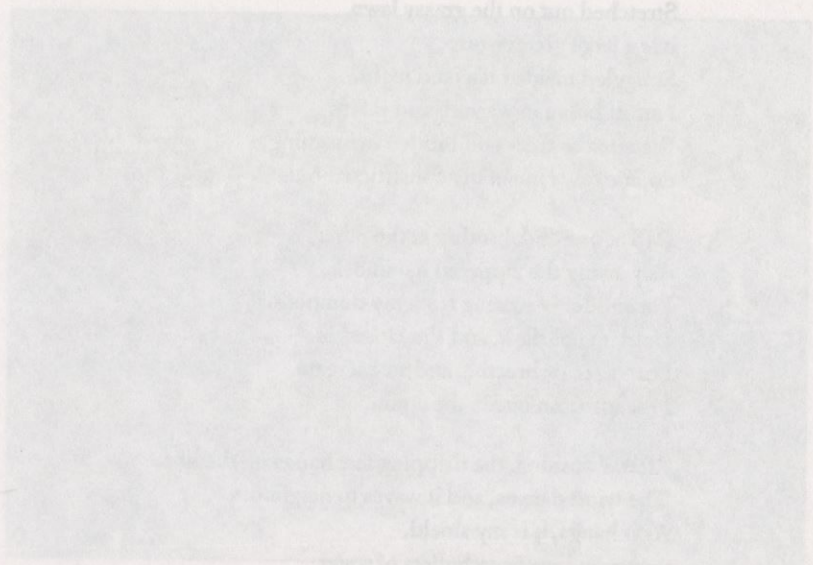
Old enough now, I drive up to the lake.
Oiled up in the steaming hot sunshine,
I lie on the spread-out pan and fry.

Now, old and forgotten,
much like dad's old bell bottoms,
it sits in the attic dust;
white nylon and thermax polyester
take its place.

Learned
I fifteen ways of looking at a sleeping boy

rolled up in a ball
like a clenched fist
Army green with white straps
lashing the wedges together
a straight jacket

standing upright and alone
it's attached from behind
I like brother found the miter wedges



I'm at the mercy of an adolescent boy
tripped to pull the trigger and dumped me

Old enough now I throw up to the face
Obed up in the summer hot weather
I lie on the spread-out bed and try

How old and forgotten
much like bed's old ball horses
it sits in the sun and
white with nylon and torn-up
the is place

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