

the
CRUCIBLE

THE LITERARY MAGAZINE *of* LOCK HAVEN UNIVERSITY



ANNUAL

1999

the
CRUCIBLE

THE LITERARY MAGAZINE of LOCK HAVEN UNIVERSITY

1999

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This issue of *The Crucible* was made possible through the generous support of Lock Haven University's College of Arts and Sciences and the Student Cooperative Council.

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Special thanks to:

Dean Roger Johnson for his enthusiasm and generosity;
Carolyn Perry for resolving our crisis;
the English Department for all their support and encouragement;
and to Marjorie Maddox-Hafer, who bridged the distance with countless helpful suggestions and words of encouragement.

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Justin Brocious

The End of a Light Winter

Once again geese have passed
through this old river town.
Do the locals in Lock Haven remember
when the great v-flock last flew,
blowing away fall and its funeral colors
beneath the icy draft of their wings?

We tightened ourselves down
near early November contemplating
summer and the first frost,
but we didn't know
that Winter's grip unrolls,
loosening us from her calluses.

The old folks still are laughing.
Arthritis slept without stirring,
and they've been mobile all year.
If one of those old souls would have spoken
soon enough, could they have saved
those birds the pain of carrying themselves?

It seems that someone must suffer.
We have adapted ourselves to these definite seasons.
Pressure still rises, as on riverbanks,
when seasons collide and the bridge pillars ache.
In Pennsylvania, we all pay dearly
Even for a light Winter.

Beth Bertram
Consider the Lilies

Cold April air
chilled the stained glass,
shattered it into a thousand
shards of spectacular light
lost in the shadow
of your dark suit.

A pair of years passed,
love was twice-taken,
son, now wife.
Spilled stained glass
splintered our spines
and we bled bitter tears
for the voice, laugh, and scent
that I no longer remember.
Today we weep for the loss
that gave breath to him.

She, sitting, feet curled
tightly under her, invades
my memory. Always a lily,
splendor spun a sheath of beauty
cloaking the cancer
that ate her hair, hope,
and eventually her.
Today she is whole,
and weariness wrinkles deep
beneath your envious eyes.

Perhaps you are not weeping
because their scents are mingling,
fingers entwining,
voices laughing.
Now your lilies are rooted
to more than a fleeting tomorrow.

David G. Harris
Encomium

Silent spectres gather in somber mass
past the weeping of willows
o'er bridges of sorrow's tears
to death's open door.
Heads in unison bow,
barefoot contessas lament.
The red-eyed sun bids farewell.
Distant thunder upon the living roars.

From the gold-throated shepherd,
words soar as on the wings of the sparrow.
"Of his goodness, Praise be!"
"Of his righteousness, Hallelujah!"
"Of his immortality, Amen."
"Rest thee o weary soul, give thought no more."

Words echo a fateful pall.
Ashes upon ashes.
Dust upon dust.
We commit you unto the earth,
from whence you come.
Dust upon ashes.
Ashes upon dust.

Fields in stillness fall
as silent spectres fade.
All is done.
All is done.
Rest you weary spirit, rest.

From perch of granite tomb,
the crimson cardinal sings
All is well.
All is well.
Life eternal rushes on.

Bradford N. Davis

The Pawn

I am merely a pawn on the table of the Great Player.

Where His hand moves me, there I dwell.

If I am asked to go forward, may I do so with gratitude.

If I am to move diagonally, and attack my foe, may I do it with faithful diligence.

And if I am taken by the rook or the queen, let me be content

in the understanding that I am to lie with my fallen brothers until I am needed again,

and placed on the front line, to do the Player's bidding, and defend my brothers once more.



Sheila B. Gernavage

Just When You Thought It Was Safe

Sitting on the edge of a dream
Dangling my legs
Letting the sweat-covered aspirations drip off my
toes
The radiant hope glistened above
And then you happened
Oh fuck, you happened
Leaped out of the atmosphere
Spoiling my couch-potato fantasies
 -- mashing them until no one wanted them
 anymore
And I just sat there -- in a puddle of virtual piss
and vomit
Playing with my downloadable self and watching
words such as "understand" and "can't" float
around like letters in alphabet soup
That's all they meant to you
 -- things to eat up and somehow form in
 what you created
I was always told that if I sat too close I'd fall in
and drown
Not a bad guess.

Ryan Fox

Taken for Granted

Jim woke up early. His head was buzzing. He had a crazy dream the night before. He never had crazy dreams. His dreams always made sense. This one was unlike anything he had ever experienced. First there was an explosion, then fire and light everywhere with people screaming frantically from all sides. Then, there was silence. And darkness. That's what woke Jim up. The silence.

He needed a shave, so he jumped out of bed and went to take a shower. Something was different, though. There was no neighborhood dog barking as usual. No kids screaming in the yard next to his. "Maybe they all slept in," he thought. He continued to wash himself. Jim was the only bachelor in the neighborhood. All the other guys on the block had a wife and 2.3 kids. Sometimes at night he could hear a couple arguing about the most insane things. He would just listen and smile. It made him happy to be a single guy.

Right after he finished washing his hair he jumped out of the shower and began to lather up. It was around 10:30 now, and he noticed something odd. It was Saturday. He knew it was Saturday because last night was Friday night, the night he would always go out with his buddies for a drink. They weren't really his buddies, just guys he knew from work that all had the same taste in booze as he did. Jim didn't really have anyone he could call a good friend. Only this Saturday was different. He didn't hear the lawn guy mowing his lawn. He came every Saturday, regardless of whether the lawn needed to be cut or not. "Maybe he stopped mowing because I stopped payin' him," he chuckled. Everything had a simple explanation.

After he had finished shaving, he thought he would call his mother. He called his mother every morning because she would have a stroke if he didn't reassure her every morning that he was still alive. He hated talking to her, and he would have preferred it if he never had to talk to her again. She was always complaining about his lifestyle and how he wouldn't settle down and give her a grandchild. He figured he was a failure in her eyes, so why did he have to call her every morning? It was her little way of keeping him 'her little boy' forever. He picked up the phone and dialed the number he knew all too well. He let it ring once. Twice. Three times. How odd. Four times. No answer. No answer? "Mom's always home!" he said aloud. "Something must be

wrong." He dressed quickly, putting on an old sweatshirt and sweatpants with holes in the knees. He flew out of the house, into his Accord and started to speed out of his driveway without a thought, until he realized something that was quite uncanny. There was not a soul outside. Usually at 11:00 on a Saturday morning the street was buzzing with action. Kids playing outside, lawn mowers clattering about, neighbors talking to each other on the front lawn. Only on this particular morning, not only was there no one outside of their houses, but there were no cars on the street. Most of the cars, in fact, all of them, were in their driveways, just as they had been the night before. But Jim didn't have time to worry about this. He had to go to see what was wrong with his mother.

Mother was halfway across town. He usually hated traveling to his mother's because of all the traffic but, just as his own street had been, so were all the others all over the city. Not a car or a person in sight. At this point Jim thought he was losing his mind. "What in God's name is going on here? Where *is* everybody?" he shouted out of his car window. It was as if everyone had vanished. As he increased the speed of his vehicle, he hoped his mother had not suffered the same fate as everyone else. As he neared the middle of town, he had to start veering left and right because driverless cars began to litter the streets. It was like the drivers of these cars just stopped driving, walked out of their cars and vanished into thin air. Jim started to become scared. How did everyone seem to disappear? And why was he still here?

He finally arrived at his mother's house. He screamed for her before going in. "Mom! Hey mom, you there?" Her neighborhood was the same as his, empty. He unlocked the front door and burst into the house covered in sweat. Where was she? Jim was terrified now. Everyone gone, even his mother? This was too much to bear. He took the house apart searching for her but with no luck. She was gone, just like everyone else in the city. His mind started racing. Was it just the city? Or the whole state? Or the whole country? Or maybe even the world? The thought of this was too much for Jim's feeble mind to handle. He collapsed in a sweaty heap on his mother's couch.

He awoke to find that it was dark. He had another crazy impossible dream. This one made no sense. He dreamt he was falling down a spiral of light that seemed to have no end to it. He just kept falling, falling, and falling, and falling.... He awoke with a start. He hoped for a second that maybe it was all a dream and his mother would be right there to comfort him and give him a big kiss. Only, this

wasn't a dream. Accepting the fact that he awoke to the same reality as that morning, Jim turned on the TV hoping that maybe it would have the answer to this horrible catastrophe. All he saw was static. There was a TV in the kitchen. Maybe that one would be working. Only more static. There were no answers from what he could see. All he could do was leave his mother's house, because staying there was making his head spin.

As he was driving back through town, a million thoughts ran through his head. Thoughts like, "Why?" "How?" and "WHAT THE HELL?" recycled themselves over and over again inside his brain. The city was like a ghost town. What could he do to find out what had happened? He stopped inside shops that had been open the night before. All vacant. He thought about taking whatever he wanted, but what was the use if he was the only one around? With no one else on the planet he would die lonely. He never realized how important it was to have other people in his life. He always took his independence for granted, and suddenly he wanted to have someone there, maybe even to just talk to. Even a complete stranger. Only there was no one. He began to cry. He couldn't handle the sudden terror that overtook his body.

He could hardly drive now. He kept swerving on the wrong side of the road, not that it mattered. He had to do something fast. His mind started to race faster and faster. He finally got back onto his street and parked on his front lawn, almost smashing into the front of his house. He ran into his home and turned on his TV hoping that the answer might finally be revealed, but still all that was found was static. He tried his radio. All static. He called his neighbor. No answer. Nothing he did could reassure him that it was all in his head. It was really happening, and he knew what he had to do or he would go insane.

The gunshot echoed for miles around. Unfortunately, nobody in the world was around to hear it.

William Kane

**Grama Prays for the Chaos to Stop
(In Memory of Little Gram)**

Peace sign medallions and love beads dangle
from the neck.

Greasy hair falls randomly
on tie-dyed t-shirts.

Organic farmers all
taking up Foxfires as Bibles.

Ten year olds
prune pot plant circles
in sweet corn rows they think concealed.

Children leave

Me behind

learning to roll doobies

as Doctor Hook

sings Oga, Oga

Oga Chucka.

Red, white, and blue

vans, shirts, and handkerchiefs

as they try to blow

their noses clean

of tradition.

Acid acts peculiar

on those that have no vision.

Those pseudo hippies

speak nonsensical

and incoherent riddles,

as flowered hub caps

roll to town

and blue pot smoke

clouds the windows,

they think

I have no clue.

Harry J. Feltenberger III
rreeppeettiittiivvee rreeaalliittty...

awakened by the screaming of technology...

breakfast consists of a single marlboro...
that you just can't finish in time...

the hurried rush of the average day...
drives you mad...

never finding the right utensil, everything...
is left unfinished...

the happiness of accomplishments lasts...
but only one breath...

the day goes on, and the sunshine...
fades into the dreary mist of blackness...

your longing for the end is near...

the happy ending to a day of hell...
is shattered by the one reality that opposes your
deepest dreams.

Patrick Stehley

Untitled

You twist me till I look nothing of before
Feel gravity pulling you down by your spleen
Push the button on the elevator, but what floor
Where do I go?

Should tomorrow be forecasted by today?
Watch the play by play, but there is no resolution
Cry out to the moon for answers you'll never receive
Is disillusion paradise?

The tears that make up this paper are of confusion
Do I know I'm alive?

Is that a multiple choice or a true or false question?
I don't know the answer to anything
If life is training for something, then I'll never make it
Go ahead and kiss me, but you don't know me

But I must venture on
Everything is changing, so am I to change
I'm afraid my will power isn't strong enough
My whining soul crying for an answer

Did the earth change orbit?
Did God die, and the world is tending towards chaos?
Blind fate seems to regulate life through the glass maze
of stairs to the inner vortex of my mind
Am I crying out against nothing?

What is it I'm supposed to do?
I'll drive into the darkness with one eye shut
But I'm not blind to existence

Abuse the privilege of me, because somebody has to
I'm looking at a future of power endless spiral drive-
ways of desire for all the life of the rich man with the

soul of 5 men

Take a breath

Hold it in

Blink

See the dark horizon ahead, so turn on the high beams
to cut the night

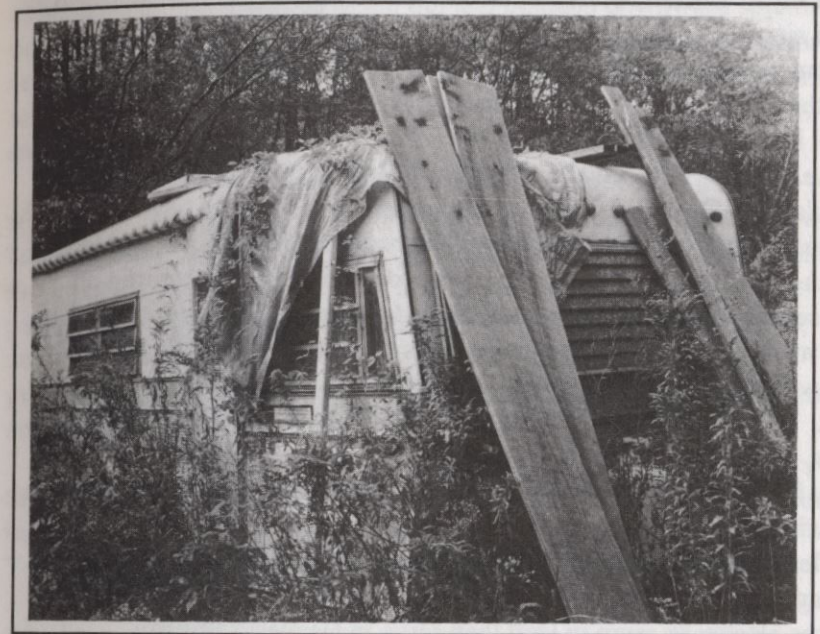
Go on through the door of perception of no innate

universe

So I'll ask the question with no one to answer

Good bye blind fate

Hello blind life.



Todd A. Madle
Satan

You don't understand. Nothing works anymore. It's—it's all gone to—to Hell, really. Nobody seems to realize...this is just my job. It's not like I get my kicks out of running this place. Well, not anymore, anyway. Sure it was fun for awhile. I ticked God off and got kicked out, upstairs. I was angry, so sure it was fun messing with that girl...Eve (shaking his head). What a ditz she was, and to think...the progenitor of free-will for your race. Then one day, God comes to me and says, "Lucifer, I need a place to send all the sinners of the world, and since their existence is your fault, you get to deal with them; welcome to the world of employment." Well, here I am, the black sheep of the family, and God needs my help. He was an asshole about it, but still he needed something from me. It seemed like a good idea at the time. I could have said "no." There must have been a point where I could've refused, but I didn't. In the old days, I used to be able to walk around, watch people burn, or get eaten alive by eagles, or prodded with pitchforks. I could get my hands dirty, hear the screaming up close, see fear, and pain in the Damned's eyes. Like I said it was fun for awhile, but who knew you humans could breed so fast? Now? Now it's, "We need to open up a new section. The burning lakes went out. They need fixed. The Republicans want an appointment. Sign this, stamp that. Initial here, and here, and here...." There's not even any fun in tempting people to sin anymore; by the time I come up with anything really ingenious for someone, they've already lied, cheated, stolen, screwed over their friends, family, pets, killed several bystanders, defoliated acres of rainforest and blown up a few school buses. Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven? Bullshit.

Patrick Arndt
Lynn

The words started shifting around on the page, tilting and warping into a mess. Lynn thought her eyes were just tormenting her head, but at the same time she wasn't so sure. Her neck spasmed. Her hand began to twitch. She knew that if she failed this test then she'd fail the course, and if she failed the course then she'd go crazy, and if she went crazy she'd quit and go home, and if she went home her parents would go ballistic, and. A tiny droplet of drool crept down her chin, hesitated for a second at the tip, and plunged downward splatting onto her test. Her head cranked from side to side, checking in horror to see if anybody had noticed. She gave her best guesses for the remaining questions, shoved the paper into her professor's face, and fled the room.

She closed the door to her apartment, dropped her bag, and walked her strange walk over to the kitchen. Her head bobbed this way and that when she moved, looking like some sort of deranged jack-in-the-box with its coiled neck pushing its head in odd directions. She pulled on the door to the fridge, tapped her foot with freakish speed, and clamped her clammy hand around one of the dozens of Dr. Peppers, all neatly arranged in rows of five. She slurped the syrupy drink and burped like a man.

Over she walked into the living room, and smiled for the first time as she approached the rather large cage placed directly in the center of the room. "How's my wittle baby? I've missed you so much! Yes, I have my baby waby."

"Lynn's my friend. Lynn's my friend." The parrot repeated this once more before squawking and fidgeting from one foot to the other. Its head jerked into awkward positions, its neck having the flexibility of jello. "Bobby hungry. Bobby hungry."

"I'm sure you are." She grabbed a bit of food pellets and tried to place it into the shallow dish, but missed. The bird didn't care, for he was already down at the bottom of the cage eating with madness. "You're my only true friend. Yes, you are my wittle baby."

"Lynn weird. Lynn weird."

"What did you say?"

"Lynn weird."

"I never taught you to say that. You stop that right now. Right

now.”

“Lynn weird.”

“Weird, huh,” she seethed through clenched teeth. She clomped out into the kitchen and cranked the knobs on the stove. “Bake,” and “450°,” the settings displayed. She grasped the handle of a drawer and yanked, the motion flicking a blob of drool onto the counter top. She selected one of its occupants and undulated back over to the parrot, the blade in her hand glinting when it hit just the right angle.

“Lynn weird.” A squawk.

Her hand fumbled with the latch and tugged on the swinging door. Feathers ruffled. Fingers darted inside the cage capturing handfuls of air. The bird pecked at its intruder, gashing out chunks of fatty flesh and leaving holes, which soon filled with swelling blood. The fluid stained its beak, which now looked as if it wore scarlet lipstick. Another grab found the warm body of the bird. It gouged out four more chunks before they made it to the kitchen. She crushed her former companion against the linoleum counter and raised her right hand high in the air.

“Lynn weir—”

The blade fell. She tore out feathers, frenzied and smiling with her chubby lips, cracked and dry. She threw the body onto her new cookie sheet and slammed the door. In ten minutes, sizzling juices could be heard from within. The puny hunk of meat browned and a smell not too far from chicken filled the stale air.

Lynn sat, satisfied. She convulsed and hunched, coughing on a feather tickling her throat.

Sheila B. Gernavage
Painting Silver Skies
(for J.L.)

White socks, red stitches
Decade in a year
Sitting and listening
Nodding and trying to understand
A writer and an artist
What an evil pair
Pretending to “smoke” pretzel sticks
We called them “cigaprez”
Made our own lyrics to Nirvana
Rode the sidewalks at the airport
We weren’t catching a plane
Rather, catching our contagious souls
While riding in the Wal-Mart shopping carts
And acting like pool sharks
We learned a bit
OK – too much
White socks, red stitches
In a hooded sweatshirt, I’m an actress
And we both know that you’re the musician
Sometimes nothing will go according to plan
We know who we are
And we can always pretend
Color-blindness isn’t so bad
Now that we’re painting silver skies
Contagious souls can always pretend.

Beth Bertram
Hannah in Purple

On tip-toe Hannah stretches
clasping bunches of elderberries,
in her fumbling fingers.
Her silly smile seems drunk
with sour wine,
lapping against her tongue,
lazily licking her lips
before stumbling down her chin.

Suddenly Hannah is sticky,
stained, beautiful in purple.

She bounces on my lap,
her fingers purpling
my hands, shirt and jeans.
Giddy with sun and sand box smiles,
we swing high into the October air,
kicking at wispy clouds,
singing to the faint, far away moon.

Ringlets of her rhyme-inspiring hair,
a honey-scented halo
golden as the autumn's leaves,
tickle and tease my nose
so that I am drunk with her scent,
and dizzy with the sweetness
of her purple smile.

Boyd A. Ulmer
Remnants

This vast expanse of dark, empty space
Hangs and waits as if it had always been
Waiting to be struck upon with bony-pale rocks
Held in fingers of creation.

Its form is motionless, reserved.
It is the wise and busy port of ideology and
Words, words, words –
It has been witness to the sights and the sounds.

Once virginal, it has been used by countless hordes
(most unwilling),
Its metallic trim (bordering on perfection)
Lends glint to the drudgery of the room.
Caked with dust, its tray remains a jutting chin.

This pool of storms (brain rain, as it were) is the save
space of knowledge –
Smears of ghostly memories and long-vanished
scrawlings declare:

*I will not crack my gum in class,
I will not crack my gum in class—*

It waits.

Justin Brocious

The Blowfly

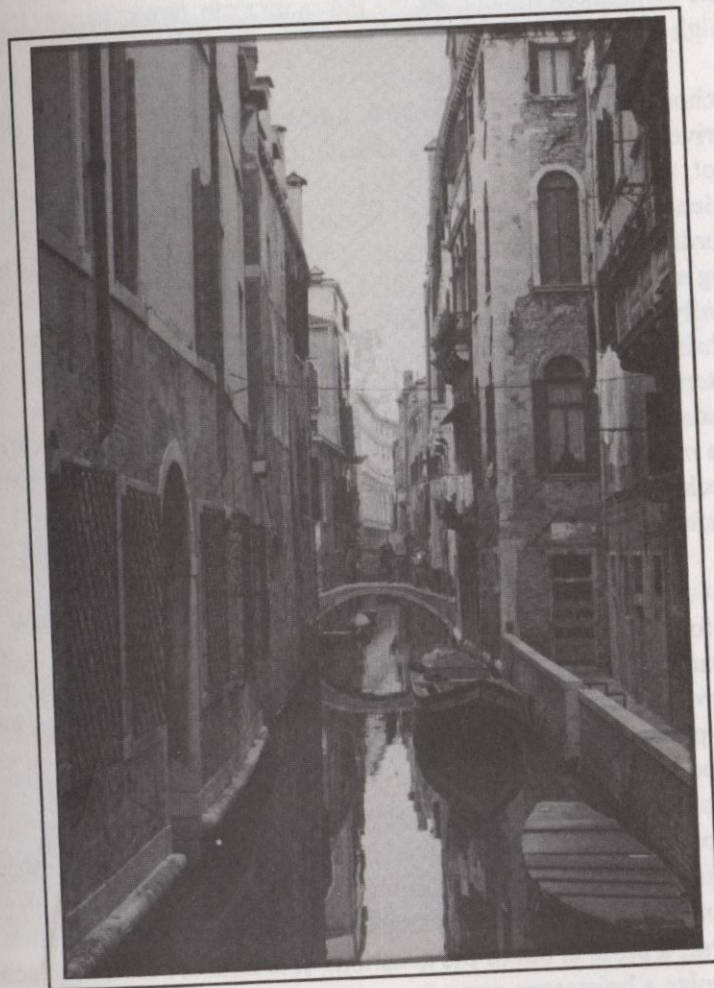
In the far alcove of Stevenson Library
there is a fly window-tapping
a slow offbeat love ballad,
but please make no accident
of my thoughts on this matter.
It is distress she is rattling
off this pane of glass
and we can ignore it as easily
as unknown novels
sway, like tired soldiers
toward the vacant slot
where a favorite book of poems belongs.
Her song ends early this afternoon.
I wait, in vain, for the encore,
but now she is crawling
across my bookbag's zipper.
Her thread-thin legs lumber
along the staggered ledges.

Children stumble like this
along railroad timbers.

Old now and dying,
the movements of her body are almost human.
No longer do her motions surge.
Only drowsy actions like this
lead to deeper sleep.

She falls to the table, back first
on a white field of paper.
There are rainbows on the underside of her wings
that split the light in prism flecks of color
before fading into smoke.
Between the black hairs a few golden
strands streak, like the sunlight.
Too many times I have faced

a window with wavy imperfections,
distorting and stretching the landscape,
or the upright curve of the human figure.
It is nearly enough to make us tap
window glazing for a loose seam
where fresher air and the hint
of a world full of errors reminds us
how perfect we are all.



Nozomi Takada

American High School and Japanese High School

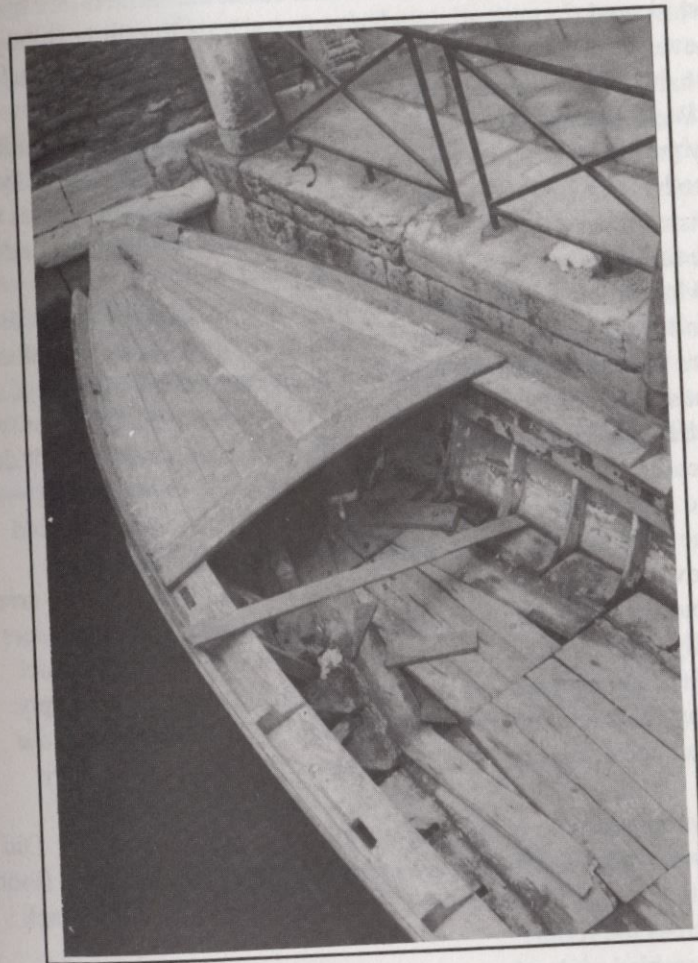
My roommate is crazy about taking pictures. Whenever she goes back to her home, she shows up in our room with new pictures on Sunday night. Therefore, her desk and furniture are covered with happy smiles of her family and many friends. Now, watching her pictures at a prom, I am envious of American high school girls. Even if the contents of the classes are the same as in Japan, as you know, a high school life is not limited to classes.

In my arbitrary judgement, an American girl enjoys her high school life to the full. Every morning, she starts the engine of a car and drives to a school, winding up with lively rock and popular music; if not, she may ride on a school bus in which she has a seat and chats with friends. Clothes are generally casual, like T-shirts and jeans. But according to the feeling of the day, she can surprise her friends by wearing a fancy skirt and a nice shirt. If she likes sports activities a lot and really wants to try them, every club will welcome her. Summer, Christmas, and Spring vacations must be a lot of fun; no school affairs interrupt her and plenty of time are spent for fellowship and her family. Vacations are not the only pleasure. At the end of the academic year, the most exciting school event comes. It is a prom. As long as several weeks before a prom, she starts caring about a dress, imagining a wonderful night. Then it turns into reality.

In Japan, the life of a high school girl is a quite different from that of American high school girls. Every morning, she goes to school on foot, sometimes by bicycle, and public transportation. Trains in the urban area make her crazy; being crammed and squeezed into a crowded train, she is completely exhausted when she gets off a train, dripping with sweat. The dark-colored uniforms are designed by each school and no other outfits are permitted. Even sweat shirts for athletic class are restricted. Even if she is an all-around athlete, she has to choose one club, when enrolled into a high school. In addition, she cannot be overjoyed at vacations; teachers give her a mountain of assignments, and it constantly bothers her during a whole vacation. Of course, a prom is out of the question. It is unusual for a high school to organize a boisterous party for students.

Whenever I see the pictures of my roommate, I feel miserable, thinking of how gloomy a high school life I had. However, interest-

ingly, every society looks as though it offers a fixed number of hard-working years to young people. In America, after trouble-free high school days, a hard-working university life awaits a student. On the other hand, in Japan, with the aim of getting into a university and an easy and free life, every high school student is absorbed in hard studying.



We were always daring each other back in elementary school to volunteer to take the erasers down to the boiler room to get them cleaned on that raspy, cacophonous sucker-thing that only partially worked. But it wasn't the eraser machine that frightened us. It was the rumored creature that resided in the boiler room that turned *that* trick. It was whispered throughout the elementary school that little Bobby Gerus never came back from *his* trip to the boiler room last year because *it* had gotten him.

Well, if none of us raised a hand to go, Mrs. Emerson would carefully (and methodically, too) pick a hapless victim. I was lucky enough to have never been chosen until the very last day of classes before Christmas vacation was to begin (what luck!). Well, it seemed to me at the time that my luck had quickly run out.

Mrs. Emerson motioned with her bony, veiny hand in my direction and exclaimed, "William, **you** can have the privilege of taking the erasers down to the *boiler room*." I knew beyond all shadow of any doubt that she had hideously and intentionally emphasized the last two words of her sentence for my benefit. No, Mrs. Emerson, I wasn't deaf — just scared.

So off I went, erasers in arms, snickering classmates behind me, out the door and down the long, long hall to certain doom. I walked slowly, hoping against all hope that Mrs. Emerson would creep her head out the class door and call me to come back, that the erasers didn't really need cleaning all that badly, that it was just some cruel joke the class had decided to play. But it didn't happen. The empty sound of my footsteps reverberating throughout the hallway was the only reassurance of reality I had as I trudged my path to the boiler room.

I wondered with increasing horror what lay ahead of me. Did it have claws? If so, did those claws *snick-snick-snick* across the floor, or did it slither stealthily? Would it run from my presence, or attack me from across the room?

I trembled violently, a steel wool pad cramming my throat. I saw everything I ever did wrong in my life dance across my tightly-clenched eyelids. I remembered with striking clarity that I had never told my mother that I was sorry for breaking her favorite party platter

last summer. God would forgive me, surely. I wondered if anyone at home would actually miss me after my impending, gruesome demise.

I turned the corner, the last corner between me and the nasty, awful, wrinkled, age-old, stinking, rotten, filthy *thing*. Perhaps I could reason with it? It certainly didn't hate *all* little boys and girls! I carefully walked into the boiler room—and there, far off in the corner, hovered the Infamous Thing of School Legend. It made a sickening, crispy sound, like candy being unwrapped.

I peeked around the boiler itself and it came towards me, emanating some long-forgotten stench that only mummies could possess. I looked into its four eyes, shivering from the thought of my cracking bones being slurped down the gullet of a rotten, hateful blob of evil. It shuffled its large feet my way, mumbling something through its three visible teeth, then stopped. It reached its large, crinkled hands towards me, and I caught the scent of pipe tobacco, Ben Gay, and a ham and cheese sandwich all in one. Its plaid form edged ever closer, taking the erasers from my incredulous hands. It held a dry mop in one hand, some sort of bathroom cleaner in the other. It shuffled away towards the back of the room. I heard the sound of the eraser cleaner being started. I turned for a moment and saw Mr. Richards, our principal, walk by out in the hallway. He smiled and waved in his oh-so-friendly and everything's-right-with-the-world-except-for-the-fact-that-I-was-about-to-be-eaten-alive fashion. And I fainted.

Kelly June

Blame

I wasn't there
when it happened.

I didn't walk
your wintry trail
or shed any tears
with you
as you marched along.
I didn't see
your spectral dance
as you summoned
your savior.

I didn't hear
your soul's song
or the snap of the whip
as it stung the air,
stirring the cotton with its breeze.
I didn't hear
the quiet rumble
of the railroad
as it carried you north.

I didn't see
the Aryan rising
in his quest for perfection,
covering a planet
with his hate.
I didn't smell
the concentration
of your smoky perfume
as it drifted across the land.

I wasn't there
when it happened.
I couldn't speak up,

couldn't defend you,
couldn't save you.

But
I have heard your stories
and felt your pain
across this span of time.
My heart has bled,
aching with your sorrow,
shrieking at the injustice.
In my dreams
I've not answered
the call of gold,
shouted from the hills.
In my dreams
I've stoked the fire,
fueling that northbound locomotive.
In my dreams
I've cleared a space for you
in my attic.
And,
in my dreams
I've saved the seat
next to me—
at the front of the bus—
just for you.
So,
please don't blame me,
just because I'm a white girl.

Eric Hartman
Offended?

My poetry sucks
life goes on
the meat of the day remains the same
and I would maybe starve
rather than indulge in the daily
rat-race, hypocritical, bullshit, acting, game-playing
of modernity

Tired of walking past dirty street people
and always wondering
Why can't you eat on your own?
Is this somehow my fault?
Is it the system?
Do you drink daily before anything else?
Take heroine?
Do I owe you money?
Why are you asking me for some?

So after my conscience trips and flips
over the plight of all those bums
that I do not know and will never understand
I just being the bullshit.

Here I sit back in student accommodation
Of course among the privileged with homes
And now I am being blasted by a
hash-smoking, Armani dress-wearing
socialist supporter who tells me
that because I am American
I'm brainwashed by culture and
my country is responsible for all, yes all,
poverty in the world.

So I listen to her ramblings and often interject,
but she raises her drunken and stoned voice
and I'm disinterested so I allow her preaching

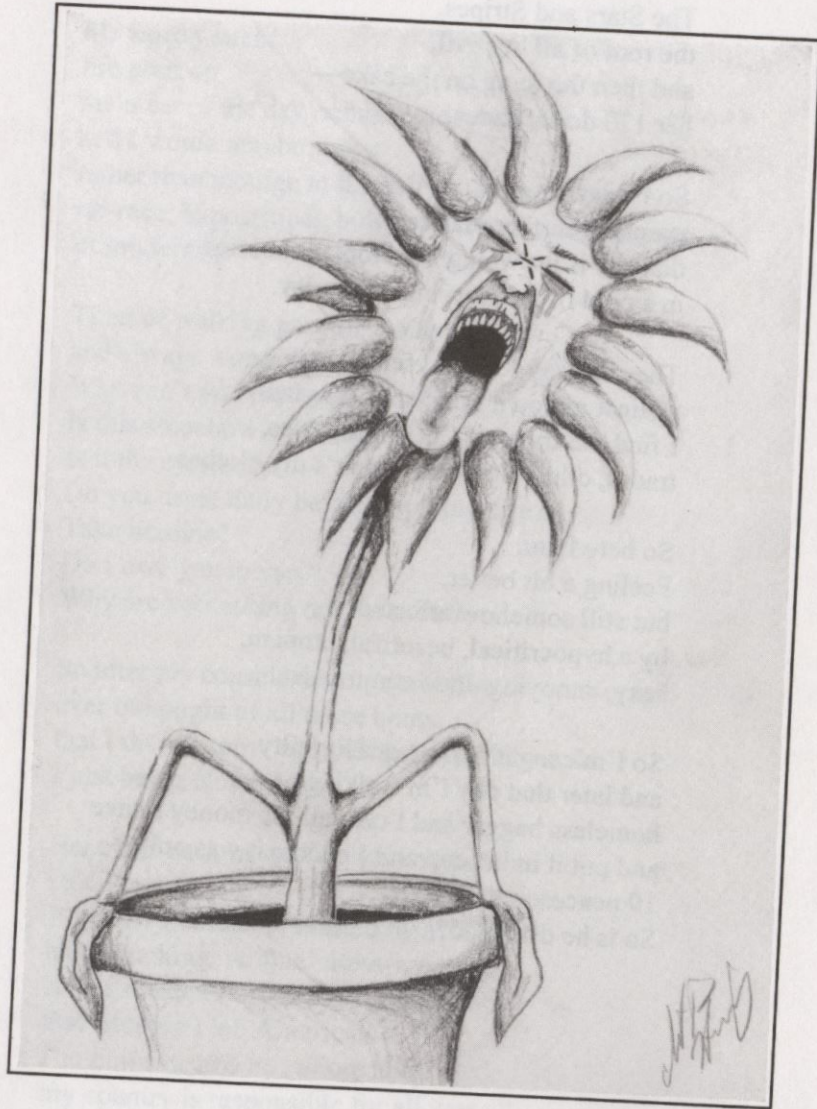
and all the while I chuckle inwardly
because she's wearing a sweater
with a huge flag on the front,
The Stars and Stripes,
the root of all her evil,
and then the icing on the cake—
her 170 dollar shoes.

So I feign interest
even as I further realize
that she is drowning her utopian theories
in a pool of self-serving hypocrisy.

The next day I test myself
against my own criticism, and gladly,
I find the fruits of Christmas, sales,
trades, other's trash, and that's my clothes.

So here I am.
Feeling a bit better,
but still somehow affected
by a hypocritical, beautiful, utopian,
sexy, annoying, loud communist.

So I'm caught feeling quasi-guilty
and later that day I'm walking past a
homeless beggar and I take all the money I have
and put it in his cup and I realize it was only—
19 pence.
So is he offended?



William Kane
Those Faces

Dad never liked Buck. He said there was something wrong with him. But he was my best friend on days like these. We started down the block. All my friends were swimming, but I couldn't 'cuz I can't swim. So when they'd go swimming, I'd hang out with Buck. I kicked a can, as if it were a soccer ball, to the drain and made the winning goal. I wanted something to do and I was having a hard time finding that something. Buck had stopped to work his thing against a fire hydrant; I was beginning to worry about his rudeness. "Come on!" I yelled. Buck was not trained at anything but eating, sleeping, drinking—and of course being Buck.

It was a hot summer day. The clouds were the wispy kind—high in the sky, not the kind of clouds that are fun, not the ones you can imagine on while lying back in the grass. The sky was wide and open and the sun shone hard on Buck and me. Buck was licking himself; his licks were long and drawn out, to the point of annoying. I rolled over. Buck ignored me, working himself on the rude spot. I decided it was time to do something before he drove me nuts.

I decided I was going to explore the old Murphy house, so I ran to Uncle Bob's. He was in the yard and he never asked me too many questions, so he was the perfect person to ask about a flashlight. Uncle Bob was in his shorts washing his truck. His pale legs looked funny, hanging out at the bottom of his cut-offs. Uncle Bob didn't work; he was "collecting checks for doing nothing," as Dad always said. I liked Bob not working. He'd take me places—he was never busy.

I ran up toward Uncle Bob. He never saw me because he was reaching for his beer. He made the funniest face when he drank beer. I never knew why he made that face, but it was funny. Uncle Bob laughed a lot more than Dad. Every once in a while I'd think, "Why can't Uncle Bob be my Dad? He's fun." I tried to sneak up on Uncle Bob, but I can't—never could—he always got me every time. He turned the hose on me and smiled his toothless grin. His whiskers buckled. "Gotcha!" he said.

The water was cold and it took my breath away for a second. He lowered the hose. "What's up, Toad?" He always called me Toad. "What are you and that crazy dog of yours up to?" he added, as Buck chased his tail in the yard like he was a puppy. Then Uncle Bob lev-

eled the hose on him, only to have Buck chase the water up the hose, half snapping and half licking at the stream.

"Uncle Bob, can I use a flashlight?"

Uncle Bob replied, "You know where it is. Go get it. Remember where you got it, though."

I went to the garage for a box under the workbench. As I watched from the garage, Uncle Bob stood out there playing with Buck, spraying water into Buck's mouth as he sipped his beer, making that funny face. As I watched Uncle Bob with his beer belly hanging over his shorts, I thought about what Dad always said about Uncle Bob not being all right since he came back from 'Nam. He seemed all right to me. I liked Uncle Bob. He was easy to get along with, and he never asked questions. He didn't like questions. Uncle Bob hardly ever answered Dad's questions.

I grabbed the flashlight and ran out the door of the garage as fast as I could. I ran past Uncle Bob and yelled, "Thanks," while calling for Buck, still in the trance the hose water had put on him. I ran down a block and Buck's nails were scratching the asphalt behind me, trying to catch up.

There it was. The Murphy house. Old Maid Murphy lived there in the old days. Dad and Uncle Bob talked about how she would take the broom to them when they stole apples and got caught. But no one lived there as long I could remember. I called Buck, who stopped to mark another fire hydrant. I was starting to feel sorry for the firemen who checked them every once in a while. They'd let one open a bit so I could cool off, and if they knew what my dog was doing, they'd probably never open one for me again. Buck cocked his head, and I was starting to think that Dad was right about Buck "suffering brain damage."

I entered the Murphy house. The floor was covered with glass, and it snapped under my feet as I walked in. It did that all the time. From behind, Buck slammed into the back of my legs, buckling them forward. "Buck, you stupid son of a bitch!" I scolded him, and he dropped his head till I apologized. Then he cheered back up, chasing his tail as slats of wood and dust kicked up in his twirling circles of stupidity and black-gray hide. I decided to explore while that stupid dog was spinning on the first floor. I moved up the staircase watching with the flashlight for the broken step. I was going to the attic; it was unexplored territory and I was going to be the first.

I moved slowly. The third floor was the last outpost before the

great ascent to the peak, Mount Everest. I made wind storm sounds with my mouth, and I wiped my pretend goggles with my other hand. The imaginary snow and wind were pushing me back two steps for every one I took. Finally, I made it to the outpost and called the other two groups below. "Mountain Goat One, this is Mountain Goat Three, come in."

"Go ahead Mountain Goat Three."

"I'm going for the top, Mountain Goat One."

"Wait, Mountain Goat Three... wait for group two."

"I can't." I pretended to drop my radio and pull on my invisible glove. I looked up the sheer cliff of the attic steps. The final peak was in sight. I crossed myself the way Mom did when she entered church or accidentally cursed. I was halfway up the peak when I heard Buck's heavy paws beating like an avalanche.

I ran to the top of the steps, to hide before he saw me. But he sniffed the steps, found my scent in the snow, and snuck up behind me. The door to the attic was stuck shut and I bounced against it. Nothing happened, so I returned to the second floor to the outpost. I needed some real life tools, and I found one - Jerry's gun - he got it from his dad's shop. It was an old hammer with the claw part missing, and he used it for a pistol. It was a good pistol, too.

I put the hammer in my belt loop and started back to the attic door. I hit the door once, right on the metal part around the doorknob, but nothing happened. I pounded and pounded and pounded and pounded some more. Finally, the top half was big enough for me to fit through, so I climbed up and in, falling onto the floor.

I lay there a second to make sure I wasn't hurt, the sweat was dripping into my eyes. The dirt and dust stuck to my wet clothes making mud all over. I got up slowly. On one side of the room, there was a pile of wood of all different sizes. "Good to build a tree house," I thought. There was a path of wood like a bridge that ran in the center only and a box sat on it. I knew there were cool things inside it. The box was wood and had metal at the corners. The lid was rounded and the latch was flipped up, so I opened it. The dust was thick on the lid. It made me sneeze.

There was an old army hat, not the kind Uncle Bob wore, but older, not even the kind Grandpap wore in his army pictures. This one was a Smokey the Bear hat; it was dusty and smelled musty, just like the inside of the box. I took it out and put in onto the floor. Then I decided to try it on. It was big and it fell down over my eyes.

Buck barked at the busted door, wanting in, so I went to tell him that I was busy and he would have to wait. He didn't understand. Buck cocked his head like a dork. I hurried back to the box to find some more cool stuff and heard Buck walk in a circle and plop down at the half-busted door. I reached in and found a net that looked like a hat, but it wasn't. It reminded me of something a bee guy would wear. I slipped it on my head, and I started sneezing; it was full of dust, which made it hard to breathe. I took it off my head and let it fall to the floor. It wasn't cool.

Then I lifted what looked like a weird pair of pants, but there was no zipper and they felt itchy, like Mom's winter jacket. I reached into the front packet. There was fuzz and wood and two pinkish-gray little animals, but they didn't move. I put them in the inside of the Smokey the Bear hat with the fuzz and covered them, thinking they might get cold – they had no hair. I returned to the inside of the box; there was a bundle of letters with no stamps on them, and a red ribbon tied them together. I put them into the net thing. Then I looked in again. There were two round hard pieces of paper, and I put them into the net thing too.

By now, the box was almost empty except for a folder – a black folder – and there was a picture of a pretty girl in it, and a man and some trees. There were also some pictures of eyes that were just weird. I needed to find out what those small, bald animals were, and maybe Uncle Bob could help me. He wouldn't get mad because I was in the Murphy house, like Dad would. So I carefully picked up the hat and stopped. I shoved the black folder into the net thing, grabbed the hat, and started back to the door.

I looked out the door and I knew I couldn't lay the little naked animals on the floor with Buck there. He would eat them. He ate anything. So I put everything onto the floor, the hat and the net thing, and I shook the door. It was not sturdy now and popped open. Buck jumped up and ran in. I grabbed the hat and held it over my head so Buck couldn't get the bald animals. As Buck sniffed the air, smelling them hard, I screamed, "No!" Then I grabbed the net thing off the floor and started down the steps. I reached the first floor, and Buck thundered down the steps looking for me. He didn't like being left behind; I think he was just scared.

As I walked down the street, Buck jumped and snapped at the hat. I finally got to Uncle Bob's. He was sleeping in his lawn chair, and I woke him. He jumped up like he was having a bad dream. His

eyes were wide and he seemed really sleepy. "Toad," he said, "Please don't do that." He put his hands on his head. I stood there quietly as Uncle Bob woke up. He seemed awake but he was mumbling to himself over and over. He finally stopped after awhile, but it took so long I had to place the net thing on the ground.

Finally Uncle Bob seemed awake. He stopped mumbling and asked me what I wanted. "Uncle Bob, I found some things and will you help me figure out what to do with them?"

"Bring them into the house."

When we went to the kitchen door I told him we better leave Buck outside. Uncle Bob looked confused; his one black eyebrow went up in the air and his forehead came down. "OK," he said, as we fought Buck back from the door, but he still got in, snapping after the hat. I kicked him and Uncle Bob said, "Don't kick him; he's just a dog." Uncle Bob looked mad but not as mad as Dad got; Uncle Bob didn't hit me. The table was messy and there were envelopes and dishes and beer cans sitting all over it. Uncle Bob pushed them to one end to clear a spot. I put the Smokey the Bear hat on the table and the net thing on the floor. He looked at it, not bothering to ask where the stuff came from. He reached on top of the fridge and gave Buck a treat. Then he filled his bowl—the one he used when Buck came to see him—he liked Buck. I put my hands in the hat and scooped out the tiny animals, fuzz and all. I picked away at the fuzz with my fingers as Uncle Bob watched and Buck lapped and licked at the water. As I pulled them out of the fuzz and held them up, I asked Uncle Bob, "What are they?" He took one in his fingers, kindly. It looked like his big fingers would hurt it. I held my breath. He looked at it closely, holding it out so he could see it. Just then Buck jumped up and snatched the bald animal from Uncle Bob's hand, and it was gone. I wanted to kick Buck so hard in the ribs that it hurt me inside. Uncle Bob's face looked sad and he said, "I'm sorry" – something Dad never said. Then he kneeled on one leg and hugged me in his big arms. I guess because I might have looked sad or mad or something.

Uncle Bob said, "You shouldn't be mad at Buck; he's only doing what dogs do."

He petted Buck and forgave him, but I wasn't going to. I was still mad.

"Uncle Bob, why didn't they have hair like the ones Dad caught at home?"

"They're baby mice."

"Oh," I said, like I understood. My forehead wrinkled up the way it did when I didn't understand. Except Uncle Bob didn't yell; he explained.

"They don't have hair like the ones your Dad catches in the traps. They don't when they're this young." Uncle Bob kindly laid the baby mouse on the table on top of the fuzz. Then he went to his fridge and grabbed a beer for him and a soda for me. He opened the beer and took a drink, making that face again, that wrinkly face. I opened my soda and pretended I was drinking a beer with him as I made a face too. Uncle Bob put his beer down and took the hat and turned it over and looked closely at the emblem. He turned the emblem to me. "You know what that is?" he asked, and handed it to me.

I looked closely at the emblem. It was an eagle and the earth. "No, I don't," I said.

"It's a Marine Corps emblem."

"You mean like the few, the proud?"

"You're smart, Toad. Just like that. This one is old, real old."

I thought about being one of those Marine guys a long time. I was always a Marine when we played war. "Uncle Bob," I said. "I want to be a Marine when I grow up."

"Why?" he asked.

"Because I want to kill people."

"No, you don't, Toad. Trust me, I stay awake nights wishing I'd never killed anyone and even during the day I see them, Toad."

"Really, Uncle Bob?" I needed to ask him more but it looked like Uncle Bob was sad as he sipped his beer. "Uncle Bob, will Buck see faces for eating that mouse?"

"That's a good question, Toad. I really don't know." Uncle Bob looked upset as he rubbed Buck's head with his head down. I asked him if he was all right.

"I'm thinking about you, Toad. I don't want you to see those faces."

"OK. I'll be a fireman or policeman."

Uncle Bob's face seemed happier, and he asked me, "What else do you have?"

"What's this?" I asked as I picked up the fish net thing and put it on the table.

"It's a mosquito net to keep the bugs off."

That wasn't interesting, not like the hat was, so I dumped the other things out of it. I let it fall to the floor and Buck sniffed at it

hard. He grabbed in his teeth and tossed it back and forth. I grabbed the most interesting next – the pictures – the one of the girl. "Look at this."

Uncle Bob smiled, watching Buck and smiled even more when he looked at the picture. Maybe he knew her, I thought.

"This is a flapper." His smile was big and his toothless hole showed.

"A what?"

"A flapper," he said. "A girl, a dancing girl. That's what they called them in the old days. They were carefree, and they loved to dance and have fun."

Uncle Bob looked at the picture, as if he was trying to use x-ray vision on it. "She's pretty, isn't she?"

"No, girls stink."

Uncle Bob turned it over and checked the back and he read it out loud: "Mary Mahoney 1923 Lesson One." Then he looked through all the pictures and checked the back of each one. "Lesson Two... this one is Lesson Ten... All these faces are Lesson 5."

He went through them all and checked them all. "This one is Lindberg," he said.

It was a guy in a plane and he was wearing goggles, a hat that covered his ears and a brown leather jacket.

"Who's Lindbergh?"

"Lucky Lindy. The first man to fly from New York to Paris non-stop," Uncle Bob said.

I thought people did that all the time, so what? I wasn't interested in that stinky cheese guy. Then I asked him what the lessons meant.

"Oh, that means that somebody colored them because back then there was no color film." I thought if someone colored them with crayons, they did a good job. It was hard for me to stay in the wide lines of my coloring books. Uncle Bob looked through the letters and read one out loud to me.

Dear Mary,

I miss you every day and it is terrible here. The trenches are wet and our feet are sore and the pain in them is almost unbearable. My only absolution is not my patriotic duty, but to have you in my arms again and clean sheets to sleep on. It sure is funny how you miss things you used to take so much for granted. As I write this I hope you

never thought that I took you for granted and if I ever did, forgive me please. I forgot what a bath was like two months back. I hope and pray for a day when this war will end. I long for a time when we can be together and never be apart again. My friend Lawrence was shot yesterday, and we have not received any word about him yet today. I hope he's alive. Did you receive the ten dollars I sent you in the last letter? I won it playing...

Uncle Bob stopped in the middle to move Buck's nose back off the table, away from the mouse. He told me to put it in the hat before he ate that one too and he started reading again.

"Where was I?" He started reading again...*playing poker with the guys. Don't be mad; there isn't much to do when we have free time. It's hard to sleep and even harder without your arms around me. Please, Mary, stay as beautiful as I remember and tell everyone back home I'm fine.*

Love, Kenneth

I put the mouse in the hat fuzz and all and gave Buck a mean look and he went back to the net thing again. Uncle Bob's face got a funny look again. He picked up the picture of the flapper and looked at it once more. I asked him, "Are you all right?"

"I'm fine, Toad. What else is here?" As he put the picture down, he found the two hard paper rolls and he slowly unrolled them. They were long pictures. Uncle Bob read the writing in the corner. 'The Unveiling of the Marine Corps Statue, Paris Island.' Toad, this is history."

I was busy thinking about the mouse, touched it, and felt sad. I thought that maybe we should bury it. So I asked, "Uncle Bob, can we bury the mouse?"

"Of course. I'll get the shovel." He let the picture lie. I grabbed the Smokey the Bear hat and carried it to the yard. Uncle Bob was behind me as Buck jumped for the hat. I held it high again. We moved to the backyard as Buck busted through the door and ran around us excitedly. The sun was still hot and the brightness made me squint my eyes as if I'd bit a lemon. Uncle Bob dug the hole and I held the hat firmly.

"Uncle Bob," I asked as he tugged his pants up. "Can we bury them in the hat?"

"If you want."

"I do. It doesn't fit and I don't want to kill anything anymore."

"That's good. But you didn't kill them. They were probably

already dead."

"I think I'll see their faces, though." As we placed the hat on the ground and Uncle Bob saluted, I did too, and Buck chased his tail, stopped, and cocked his head stupidly.



Patrick Stehley
Cardboard Suburbia

The tulips bloom with their iridescent blandness
The sky drops the night on us
Dark clouds, like lead walls
We illuminate ourselves
I'll read my horoscope and predict my past
Bums staggering past with toothless smiles dreaming
of the easier times as they swill down their cough
syrup to fulfill their fix
The alleys calling me home
Cardboard condos
Fulfill my dream by putting a dime in the blindman's
cup
Left like the filter of a smoked cigarette, dirty and
decaying
Dreaming about the cognac days
High on society, high on "the man"
Fill my cubical with remnants of the future
Water rushing past me, either the rain or the old man
above me pissing, flowing toward the sewer
The glances of sympathy and disgust
I'll be the 3- pronged reciprocal of my predecessor
Pick through garbage to pull out gourmet
I'll raise your taxes because of your disgust
4 paper walls supply me with the angst to go on
Defecate down at the park, but the stench follows me
no matter how hard you work to get it off
Where are the Reagans now that "just say no" means
using dirty needles to bring me back to my dreams
Calloused hands bleed as I push my legless body on
this cart
Spare a buck?
Nicotine and Mad Dog are my friends that follow me
through this escapade
Viral infection ticking off seconds
The second coming, are you prepared as the old
bearded man wears the sign "the end is near" like the

remnants of the 50's signs "eat at Joe's"
Born in filth, how am I to fight my way out
Sell my body to feed my children, you crave sexual
relief while all I want is a loaf of bread for my chil-
dren.
So I'll swallow what you give me to be able to buy the
box of Frosted Flakes, because my son said that the
tiger told him "they're great"
Station wagon on its last leg, my wife and I move from
city to city looking for some stable employment to put
food in our children's mouths
Maybe today I'll find that job that will be stable
The voices! Kill them, they want me to do bad things!
Smash the window to bleed away the bad dreams.
Momma, is that you? no, no, no, no, no, no, no
Hello, definitely, gotta, gotta, gotta...
ahhh man, loan me a ten spot, ah man I need a fix, ah
come on. I'm good for it, do ya want sex?
ahh man, I need just a little bit, then I'll stop
Drip, Drip, water dripping from the window boxes as
the rats scurry for shelter as the storm starts in
cardboard suburbia.

Ryan Fox

Altered Reality

In the darkness,
Light does not exist.
Evil presides in the dark recesses
Of the mind.
Power corrupts
The truest hearts.
Life brings nothing but
Death.
Skeletal remains
Clutter every path
Shattered hopes and dreams
Lie dormant,
Never to awaken.
This realm has no order.
Only chaos.
Sad figures sit
On lonely hillsides
With their heads in their hands,
Crying.
Weeping.
Trying to cherish lost time.
But to no avail.
There can be no Reconciliation.
Lives become torn apart.
Images become distorted.
Miracles are just rumors
Passed down from one generation
To the next.
The grass no longer grows.
Animals no longer frolic in the meadow.
The world is vacant.
An eternal wasteland.
Blood covers what once flourished.
Evil controls what once was wholesome.
Sin becomes law.
The flesh melts away,

Leaving only the cold bone.
And when I wake up from this dream,
I realize that it is all but true.
Only when looking beyond the realm of normal sight
I find the reality.
But the reality becomes only a dream
Once again.

Nena Hipps

Who's To Know

You know how we all have a little plan for ourselves? You know what I mean; we all have a checklist of the many things that we want to accomplish by the time we are "such and such" an age. Whether it's a mental checklist or one jotted down on a napkin, you have one, right? Me? Well, let's just say that I certainly wouldn't have planned my life the way it has turned out. I found my checklist the other day. One that I wrote when I was fourteen. It's scary to me how much I have changed from that innocent but oh-so-mature girl. If I had stuck with everything on my "checklist" I would still be married to someone that I truly could never love. I would have probably broken a few bones as a gymnast. And I would have had three children that I could never have enough patience with. Instead, I am a few months away from reaching my biggest dream...to become a teacher. I have three beautiful cats that I refer to as "my kids." I have a wonderful boyfriend. So wonderful in fact, that it makes me want to kiss my divorce attorney's feet just one more time. I have met some of my heroes. And I now have the greatest friend that I have ever known. Strange, huh? How you think that the people and things that you cared so much about and would have died for a few years ago, are not the same people you want to be with now. That job that you dreamed about having while you were a child doesn't seem so wonderful now. Your tastes in music, movies, clothes, and food change, why shouldn't your goals? So maybe it's a good thing **not** to live your life by a list. Don't get me wrong. It's good to have goals and all, but I thank the good Lord, that I forgot about my own list. Even though I haven't been the best person or haven't always made the right choices, and I have certainly strayed from my original plan, I have had a pretty terrific life so far, and I wouldn't change who I am today for anyone or anything...but who's to know? Ask me if I still feel the same way in a few years....

Brian Pelka

Soft Gold Sparkle and the Gentle Flame

Soft gold sparkle
And the gentle flame,
Snow flake folly
Cleansing rain,
Cleverly calm
Crisp and cool,
Caught in the stare
Of nature's duel
Soft gold sparkle
And the gentle flame
Midnight blue
And soft terrain
She raptures in melody
Yet sobs out of tune
She's a snowflake folly,
In the midst of June.

David G. Harris
A Quiet Autumn Day

Alone midst nature's wonders I walk
along a broken trail.
Cast in the fading glow of the autumnal sun
and the mystic wolf's haunting wail.
Majestic forests of autumn yellows
of vibrant crimson reds
stand before me as an endless sea.
Trees as silent sentinels stand
watching ever vigilantly.

Once verdant summer leaves
blanket the forest floor.
I arrive upon a silver rill.
Its cold, clear waters
escape beneath my feet.
Whispering winds caress my face
as I progress along the path
laid out long before me
by ancient footsteps of times long past.

Silently I'll wind my way
descend the mountain steep.
Returning to my quaint abode
to settle in and wait
as nature quietly prepares
for a restful winter's sleep.



Tabitha Goodling
A Storm's Whisper

So mystical
moist aroma
as storm approaches

Fragrance of flowers
yet to bloom
Scent of grass
not yet kissed with spray

Sweetness in wind
that lingers
anxious to release
summer energy

Rumble beyond the hills
Flash between the trees

Watching gray become white
and the dry earth
gracious and accepting
the pelts and patters
of the passion in the sky

Sheila B. Gernavage
When It All Comes Together

My eyes glazed over the table of contents
--too tired to sleep
--too wicked in my shadow
And I came across "Henry sats in der bar and was odd"
Length -- not too long
Reasonably structured
--syllables the eye could wander through
And the classical music danced around
--an 8-track never before sounded so alive, so
pure
The icy chills that did pirouettes on my skin had
rhythm
I welcomed them, in some hope for great
inspiration or, in the very least, a means to
keep my eyelids from dropping to my page
Somewhere, someone was thinking about me
--was a shame, they were not on my mind
Great symphonies played off in the musty air
And though I could not name the piece, or
composer for that matter, there was
some thing mentioned about the self and the
beauty, the ultimate glory, of existence
John Berryman, great composer, myself all glanced out
the window this afternoon and breathed a breath that
was very much different from the last.

Lisa Adamo

Memories of My Dear Uncle

It was as if I had just awakened;
Still a blurry image in my mind,
As though I was knocked unconscious:

Remember when I held your pistol
with my two sweet and gentle,
innocent hands

You remained calm. In your
polite, professional, policeman poise
you showed no fear.

You took the pistol and put it away.
(all along the safety was on)

Your second starry son was born, the first to
our family.

"Andrew Michael Ricci," he will say.

The resemblance—subtly striking, to you of
course.

And also that of Archie, my preemie Cabbage
Patch Kid.

"What an ugly baby!"

A wonderful expression held dear.

As you laughed, I cried.

Until I could "get you back."

Another son was coming;
possibly the most beautiful of all.

As his day was approaching,
so was yours.

It was a capturing event when Adam became
again the resemblance. But in this case, the
similarities

were the tears of fright and confusion;
the look in both your eyes, of not knowing
what may lie ahead; and the ability to see

our reflection on your bald, pale heads, that
were similar.

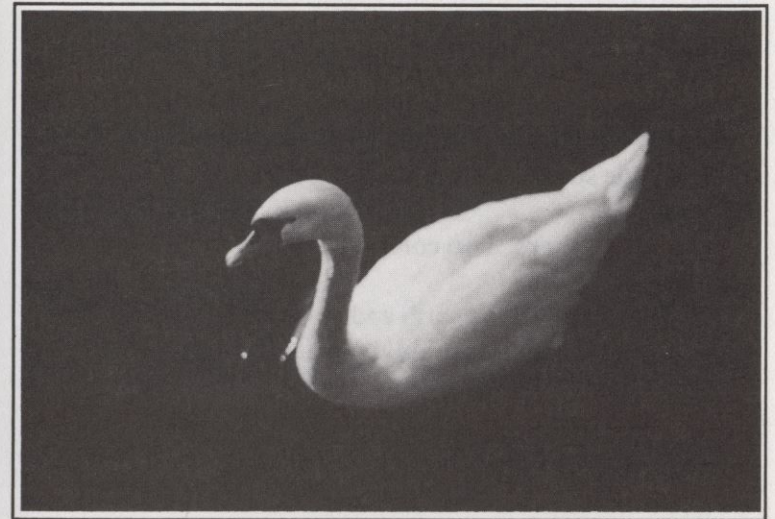
It was getting to be a very cold August.
All I could do was let
you know what my future
may someday hold, while all along knowing
yours.

How selfish of me.

Fast asleep, I am not.

Thinking of our memories is all I am guilty of.

I miss you and I am still crying.



Justin Brocious
Compensation for Alpheus

I cannot tell you why the rain is driving down so hard,
or how the fog has swathed over the river for days
without burning. Pools of water are melting through
the storm grates, gone forever underground. It's
trouble

to think that before Arethusa transformed, she plunged
from the swelter headfirst into the river Elis', naked
and so beautiful the waves began to speak of making
love.

Out of the current's center a geyser burst into blossom,
vaulting Alpheus into the air, his god-shadow setting
around her.

It was this rush of love advances that made her flee.

Artemis heard her daughter's cry and spun a mist,
thick as wool around Arethusa's body. The ground
faulted and the nymph of Achaia melted, like candles,
into the black earth. This is why the fog, the rain,
or a single strand of water curling beneath the road are
omens

for troubled times. Two colors floating in a single eye
of a woman,

one firm as the brown earth and a more liquid hue
chasing and thinning the solid tone to tears is reason
enough

for love worry. Only gods follow when a woman
exchanges

her heaven shape for a brief crystal fountain and the
next

time I reach for you I will only feel the slow drag
of water.

Beth Bertram
Shaping Silence

Starting at the small of my back,
his fingers cradle an imaginary
mound of clay, massaging
it into a masterpiece.

My green eyes muddy,
search the shallow space
separating our skin.

My spine covets this sculptor,
memorizes each movement
of his inspired fingertips.
Heavy hands knead,
arch my aching shoulders.
Spinning, I stumble to slow
sensations swallowing my shape.

I squirm.
Surprised,
he slouches,
hollowing
the nape of his neck
against my knees.

My senses somersault,
seek something to breathe
besides his scent,
blistered with sweat,
soap and frustration.

Timidly he traces the edge
of my lips, wearily following
my wandering gaze, chancing
he'll stumble if I carve
this clumsy canyon any deeper.

I wonder if you will be able to get
to know the dog who was with me
without burning. I was with you
the other night, you know, under
the stars. My name is
I think that before Aristotle
from the world's center into the
and to be a part of the world
love.
Out of the center's center, a
waiting Alpha, and the air
heavy hands. I was
It was this kind of love
Arms and legs, and
think of a world where
and the black air. This is why
of a single strand of hair
following
the world's center. Two
of the world.
the world's center and
and the world's center
rough
for love's weary. Only
the world's center
the world's center for a
and.

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