

*Druid's Cave*

*A JOURNAL OF THE CREATIVE ARTS*

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## *Entweder Nervenkrankte oder Roblinge:* Either Neurotics or Savages

Today I blew up at an ISU cop. I went to buy a paper outside of Hovey Hall, parked my car on the street and when I came back with my paper, he stopped along side of my car to tell me, "Next time find a better place to park." I let him have an earful of vulgarities. I think I called him everything in the book. He got upset and pulled in front of me to try to block my car, so I backed out into the intersection and drove in the opposite direction. This pissed him off. He followed me, with his lights on, past Stevenson Hall. I just kept going. Then he turned on his siren. I just kept going till I got to the intersection at the end of the street. I pulled over and he came up along side of the car. I gave him another earful. I finally told him what was going on and he told me I was in a lot of trouble and to just calm down. He left it at that. He didn't finish the job.

I left my apartment at about 6:00 AM. My parents went with me to the airport and of course mom was real upset.

A few phrases that have come up in conversations the past few days, "That don't make me never no mind, Gonna see a man 'bout a dog, Gonna see a man 'bout a horse, and I'm so mad I cud just spit." I'm not sure what they all mean. "That don't make me never no mind" is my favorite. I asked the guys, "What do you think of the rectum as a hole?" They just looked at me like I was stupid. "I think it's a shitty situation that should be wiped out totally." They just kind of looked at me.

A couple of acronyms have been: D.I.L.L.I.G.A.F.—

Does it look like I give a fuck; B.O.H.I.C.A.—Bend over, here it comes again; and I contributed: F.U.B.I.A.R.—Fuck-you, Buddy. I'm a reservist!

• • •

I got a flattop today. There's hardly a hair on my head.

• • •

Formation was held at 0730 this morning. We were told to clean up the rooms, turn in linen, and the rest of the day could be spent on post liberty. I watched three movies today: *Steel Magnolias*, some stupid karate flick, and *Flatliners*. Great choices. None of the movies were very stimulating—really boring for the most part.

*Steel Magnolias* was kind of funny, not because of anything in the content but because McGrath (Minnesota) hated the thought of watching a movie that starred Dolly Parton. However, when Hourigan (Chicago) told him that Dolly exposed her breasts, a lie, he was content. He watched, suffered through the entire movie. At the end he turned to Hourigan and with a pissed look asked, "What gives." Hourigan told him, laughing as he said it, that the breast scene must have been cut out.

• • •

We're flying over on Federal Express. Great.

• • •

We have to drink local water. Of course they clean up the water, but the sources are so contaminated that the amount of decontaminating chemicals added gives people the Hershey Squirts. So, right before I left, I picked up an eight-pack of soft toilet paper. Hudspeth (South Carolina) calls

the issue stuff John Wayne paper—rough, tough and doesn't take shit off of Indians.

• • •

Everyone seemed to have broken off into little representative groups of US culture on the plane. Blacks and whites broke down into groups of young vs. old, northern vs. southern, higher rank vs. lower rank, students vs. nonstudents, single vs. married, etc. In one area I noticed a row of single, young, southern, lower rank, black students sitting across the aisle from a group of married, older, southern, higher rank, white, non-students. Both groups seemed to be talking about the other—quick glances, darting back and forth, seemed to indicate that neither group felt it was appropriate for the other to have segregated itself.

• • •

The three doors on the bus had red circles on the windows. The front and middle door had a silhouette of a woman dressed in traditional garb, black ankle-length dress and a veil, with a red line drawn diagonally through to each side of the circle—no women! The rear door's red circle and silhouette lacked the red bar. On the inside of the bus, metal plates and a metal door separated the back third of the bus from the rest.

• • •

After my first day's work I remembered a quote from General George Patton, "The more you sweat in peace the less you bleed in war." I had always assumed, for some reason, that the less bleeding part also meant less sweating. Wrong, wrong, wrong.

MARK BAKER

• • •

Well here it is—Christmas. The day doesn't seem too different from any other day. We do, however, get the day off. I slept in until about 0800. No one seems to be doing much of anything. Each company gets a 30 minute Christmas celebration in the recreation center. The sand isn't even white.

Oh Christmas Bush, oh Christmas Bush. Oh boy.

• • •

It's almost 2000. I'm sitting in my tent. Not too much to do. They're showing movies next door at the recreation center. Monkey Shine is playing tonight. Not interested. Tonight I wrote, I'M CLUSTERPHOBIC—as in, "This is another cluster-fuck!" on my helmet, DRUG FREE NUCLEAR NAVY too. Also added a large peace sign to my flak-jacket with the words, HEY MR. BUSH, IT'S STILL A GOOD IDEA!

• • •

I've been patting myself on the back here the last couple of days for my brilliance at joking about the mail. When the question comes up, "Have you received any mail yet, today, or whatever?" I answer, "Yeah, but they were all addressed to ANY SERVICE PERSON." That seems to cheer up some people who are in the same position as I am—no mail so far. My other witty one-liner is to approach a person and looking at their name tag ask, "What's your first name?" When they answer I put on my "I found them!" look and say, "Your mail has been sent to Big Horn, South Dakota by mistake! It should be here in a month!" With this they look at me mystified and ask, "Really?" And I answer, "No, it's just backed up in Frankfurt with the rest of the mail."

MARK BAKER

• • •

The portapottie numbered 666 is my favorite!

• • •

#### BLISTER AGENTS

BLISTER AGENTS BURN AND BLISTER ANY PART OF THE BODY THAT THEY TOUCH. BLISTER AGENTS PRODUCE LONG-TERM INCAPACITATION OR EVEN DEATH THROUGH FLOODING THE LUNGS WITH BODY FLUIDS IF INHALED. Humans have designed ghastly ways to kill other humans.

• • •

In the back of my mind, I had hoped that after the initial wave of the air assault they would come to terms—much like the Libyans a few years earlier. When I heard, what I knew must have been a rumor, that a second strike force had been launched, I wondered who was more inhumane—they for not surrendering or us for continuing.

• • •

I'm still in my bunker. We may be in here for a while. The mood is unmoved. A few of the guys are somber, most are joking about the \$110.00 pay raise for combat duty, or that our pay is no longer being taxed! Someone just took a picture and said, "Is this a Kodak moment?" I'm sitting with my gas mask and M-16 at my side, flak-jacket on, and web gear. We have fresh water and MREs—MEALS, READY TO EAT. It's still dark outside. Nothing's happening here. We are waiting for the president's address to the nation. It's up in about five minutes, 0500 local time.

• • •

"I told the American people before, this is not another Vietnam." "Historic moment" again. I think he's lying again, or at best knows no better. "Family of nations" has been used to insinuate that they are doing wrong. "No nation will be allowed to brutalize its neighbor," unless of course that neighbor is Iran or the Kurds. Now he's quoting a lot of military soldiers. Oh boy. Call them MPs—MEDIA PIGEONS.

• • •

After each alert an "ALL CLEAR" was sounded. The Brits also gave an all clear over their PA system. Of course it caused some confusion. The accent of the British announcer was heavy enough that doubtful looks would be exchanged on the faces of people in my bunker. A joke was made that perhaps a spy, who was trying to lure us out of our bunker prematurely, was mispronouncing the statement, "ALLAH CLEAR, ALLAH CLEAR."

• • •

On the way up here we just saw butt-loads of camels. You wouldn't believe all the camels! And then when we got on this path through the desert, there was one camel that had been killed. It had obviously been hit by a military vehicle. No civilians drive on the MSR—MAIL SERVICE ROAD. It was laying still in the sand, in between where the vehicles run. It just looked like skin and bones.

• • •

A Marine HUMVEE that passed us had the skull of a camel on its hood with ELVIS written in black on the sun-bleached skull.

• • •

Well, it's just another beautiful sunset here at the USA—what we call the University of Saudi Arabia. Really pretty nice. Just sharp, and it's going down, and it's getting cold and it's time to eat, so I'll stop here and describe chow later.

• • •

I just finished taking, leaving, whatever, a dump. I wouldn't mention it at all, except that even toilets are taken for granted. Back home it's just swoosh and it's someone else's problem. In Jubail the honey wagons took care of the portapotties. But here, here we burn our shit! We built 8 ft. high boxes, with screens (to keep out the hordes of flies) and a door, to shit in. Some of the shitters have a little strip of plywood with 4 butt-sized holes. Fortunately the two boxes in my area of the camp all have plastic seats with lids, also. Anyway, the holes lead down to sections (top and bottom half) of 50 gallon drums that catch the crap the galley feeds us. It smells of diesel fuel which is already in the drums. When it fills up the people on "Dirty Harry" duty have to pull all the cans away from the shit houses and set their stuff ablaze. As if that wasn't bad enough, you must stir the waste with the diesel because it separates and doesn't dissipate. Yuk! War happens, I mean shit happens.

• • •

I'm down to two showers a week up here.

• • •

This matting that we are laying comes in 70 and 140 pound sheets. The matting is keeping me in shape. It's really rough. At night this place just rocks. The bombs just go off and go off and go off and go off and go off. It's just

MARK BAKER

unbelievable. Uhm, I'm looking at a bird out on the berm right now. You don't see a lot of birds out here. A couple white doves flew out to our mat the other day. They stopped for a little while and then went on their way. They seemed lost, maybe blown in this way with the strong winds from the storm.

• • •

They're making us take this medication (experimental). I'm not taking it. I won't take it. If I told them, they'd make me take it by watching me every time. I'm not going to let them know. The Nerve-Agent-Antidote pills sound the worst. They screw around with your nervous system—not that the botulism and anthrax shots don't.

• • •

Last night we were told by our commanders that we'd been extended again! First we were scheduled for 90 days, the first extension made it 180 days, and tonight we were told that our no later than date is now 31 JULY 1991!!! That's 8 months on active duty!! Fuckers.

• • •

The evening of the 23rd I was on watch. Actually it was early morning on the 24th—0200-0600. At about 0400 a volley of bombs, or shells, 2 sets of 12, exploded with a ground shaking light show, on the horizon. Minutes later a group of Marine Cobras flew over my head. The ground offensive had begun. Later in the day I heard that the Marines breached the first obstacle (mine field) around 0630, and the air field 40 miles inside the border, Al Jaber, had been secured! That was not planned on until day two. A group of our guys left today, with a Marine escort, to look at the job site—Al Jaber. We should be leaving here shortly.

MARK BAKER

Our stuff is packed up already. (It seems weird to be sitting here writing this as two of the guys in my tent are playing Game Boy—head to head Tetris!) The guys in my tent would complain every morning how bad the explosions were this night or that night. They would lose sleep on the rough nights. No one seems bothered by anything but the explosions. I slept right through everything! God-damn, what's wrong with me? I need to wake up. The two electronic warriors are still at it.

• • •

Another Illinois college student is in this Dixie Doin battalion. He is attending U of I at Urbana. I like the guy. He sticks up for what he believes in, he voices his opinion, he's articulate, intelligent—he's black. That makes him, "The Angry Black Man."

• • •

Just yesterday I built myself a dart board. I cut out all the pictures of Bush that I've been seeing in the Arab News and the Stars and Stripes the last couple of weeks. Glued them to a piece of plywood. I think it has kind of pissed some people off. One guy says it's treason.

• • •

About a week ago three sheep got stuck in our compound. They looked nervous. The guys had a good laugh—hopefully nothing more. Damn they were hairy.

• • •

Blackhead calls us his thunder and lightning! I bet some people used to look at General George Washington and say, "Would you stop saying that stupid shit!" Or how

MARK BAKER

about, "We have not yet begun to fight!" I would have looked at that moron and screamed, "If you'd stop playing with yourself and help, maybe we wouldn't be getting our asses kicked!!" I'd have been shot afterwards.

• • •

I was told to "nigger a job" that I was to start down at the port in Al Jubail. I asked my E-6 supervisor to clarify what he meant! He said, "You know, do it slow, make it last all day, you know, like a nigger."

• • •

I just killed my first fly with my Desert Shield fly swatter that I got today! It's sort of like throwing darts. I have a kill grid on the working end of the swatter that looks like a dart board. You can get bulls-eyes, 20s, 19s, etc. Hell, you could play Cricket if you wanted to. There are plenty of flies. I wonder how much money the fly-swatter guy is making on this war? The recession is probably coming to an end with so much to do for the soldiers in the Gulf. Atta boy, George, ya geek.

• • •

Turns out this maggot wagon wasn't serving. In fact, it wasn't a roach coach at all. It was a cold storage facility; a morgue on wheels, so to speak. It had just come back from somewhere just across the border. After a while, and after another C-130 had landed, 10 bodies on gurnees were unloaded.

• • •

A lot of the guys say that the first thing they'll do when they get home is pitch their kid's sandbox.

MARK BAKER

• • •

As you drive down the MSR, which is little more than a well-traveled path in the desert, Bedouin kids come running out of nowhere. They stop at the edge of the road and pop us little military salutes as we go racing by. In return the deuce-and-a-half tires and the wind blanket them with sand. We hit one today. The driver kept yelling, "Oh God, I got him." I don't know the guy very well. I guess he has kids back home.

It has been over a year since the war started. While typing my journal entries, letters and the like, I suffered from a bout of insomnia preceded by three nightmares in one week. In one dream, I was caught on a roof top watching the flash of explosions and listening to the rumble of tanks and gunfire. German soldiers appeared on the roof top and ordered me to surrender. I put my hands in the air and was then shot in the leg and the hand.

• • •

In another short dream I was in an underground government building that was under attack. After I heard gunfire I dropped to the floor—seemingly minutes before anyone else knew what was going on.

• • •

In the third dream, I was dodging enemy fire as I jumped into a union command bunker, landing in the remains of a badly decomposed body ((both sides in the conflict were using outdated US equipment—Patriot Missiles, Stealth Bombers, F15 Fighters, etc.)). Next to the corpse was a silver-metal briefcase—which turned out to be a solar-powered lap terminal. The dead soldier had been writing about the conflict we were presently engaged in. I began



MARK BAKER

reading his journal that began in the year 2003, during the  
Second Civil War of the United States of North America.

• • •

TIMOTHY RUSSELL

## Weaving I Now See

My arm continues where I hold this glass,  
just as the road melts into my tires.  
All things are bound as a frame  
for me now, I see no difference between right and left,  
people and animals, arcs and lines,  
or thick silence and a loud call.

I was in your church once, and I still call  
the colors I saw in your tinted glass  
wonderful and captivating with its filtered lines  
of soft light. But with only red and blue I now tire.  
I miss the more harmonious blends of grey you left  
out, those full of light and dark of the spectrum's frame.

And in sermons you always framed  
the death of a pet or a stab of beauty as calling  
for only one emotion. Years later I'm left  
thinking of the pet's burial sand ground into tinted glass  
and of that beauty as tread on one's tires,  
where a poor artist's face is bent by lines.

I also found that artists and books don't line  
up as events; culture flows like an interrelated frame,  
a net that bridges every thread, never tiring  
or ceasing. But with religious thirst you always called  
your Flower of the Desert sacrificial, to be in a glass  
apart from His worms and soil in your left

hand, a Lamb pulled from the earth and darkly left  
to fade in dust floating in those colored lines  
of tint in your churches. From behind such glasses—  
in simple life in the West—the horizon frames  
causality, but I hear the echo of human calls  
beyond the event horizon in the spokes of a universal tire;

TIMOTHY RUSSELL

and it's beautiful how I see the air flow and never tire  
when I displace it, as I mold the pillow under my left  
cheek falling into my nap. Nothing calls  
itself alone in forests, in oceans, in trees lined  
with dens, or in tall grasses flaming with frames  
of sunlight; only you want us alone under glass.

And nothing for me has tires that never caress the lines  
of roads others have left; you, mistakenly alone, would frame  
me confused now when I call my arm an extension of the glass.

FENG XIE



UNTITLED

COLLOTYPE PRINT

KRISTEN A. HOFFMAN

## A Weekend in Brighton

Louise danced in my toenails  
Last night for 20 quid  
And for an extra 5 she would  
Have done the foxtrot on my arches  
But I couldn't find the money.  
La joie de vivre from this girl  
From Bangor lit up my eyelashes  
In a blue haze from exhaust fumes  
Of tired English coaches.  
Give me a kiss my love are you there  
Right there behind the street lamp  
Kisses in a hidden alley  
And a Mothercare doorway.  
Have a pint have another  
Don't worry my love  
A black bus driver smiled at me as the bus drove on  
And let me have my fare for free.  
He knew I was on my way to Louise.

DAMON DORSEY

## A Brief Apology

It's been years since I kicked a calico,  
or pushed Sister Biata down the third  
floor rectory stairs. So why does every  
face still look like a cracked subway wall: green  
little mouths, peeling craniums scribbled  
with profane prophecies? The milk carton  
children still tug at my sleeves. A shiny  
new quarter seems to hold them for about  
an hour. Maybe I should wear tank-tops.

I jump through hoops for her on a nightly  
basis now. Every once in a while she  
sets one on fire with her breath and calls some  
of her obese friends over, to watch me  
perform the Lobotomy Ritual.  
Number sixteen is her favorite. That's  
the one where I prove I'm a man, using  
only a wooden spoon, her diaphragm  
and an occasional thumbtack. They scream  
for that one, and I guess I can see why.

A hug or a comforting hand through my  
hair comes sometimes. More of that if I had  
it my way. But she is the one with the  
whip. And what she says, goes. Since she rarely  
draws blood, I can't hurl her from the window  
without a great deal of paperwork. And  
her other lover still teaches me the  
blues on the saxophone, behind the tool  
shed every Tuesday and Thursday. Bastard.

I bought a Contour Chair Lounge, but it makes me look like Neil Armstrong on speed, so I swapped it with the Jehovah's Witnesses for a trial subscription to *Watchtower*. They need it more than I do anyway. I guess the trouble really started the other morning when I was checking the expiration dates on the milk down at the A&P. Her face was on the back of the only one that wouldn't go bad this year. I know I shouldn't care, really, but at the time, I was out of quarters.

## A Look Back

He knew she had seen the article. It had arrived on a Tuesday morning. Wrapped in the same brown paper and shoved at the only angle that would allow it to fit in the box. It had sat on the coffee table for a full week before he had a chance to look at it. Once he found the article, he didn't even read it right away, just tucked it under his arm and went to the studio. Prolific my ass, he thought. Why hadn't she said anything? He knew that nothing could sit on that damn coffee table for a week without attracting Natalie's attention.

At the studio, among the comforting smell of turpentine and the oppressive push of the ceiling pipes, he turned it page by page. He absorbed every photo, every word, every piece of work. He was amazed how fast it all came back.

It had been sometime in the fall of '84 when he met Natalie. Mark had finally convinced him to go down to "the hole" on a Friday night. If you were trying to change the world, then you were at "the hole," no doubt drunk, stoned, and naked. The artistic elite would swim in the pond, on that deserted farmland, every weekend.

When they got there, the moon was full, and a bonfire raged near the water's edge. The tangled bodies in the tall grass proved that free-love was still alive and well here.

It was cold for September, but that didn't stop the hardcore swimmers. They broke the silver water with pale bodies and clumsy gestures. It all seemed forced, and he felt like an asshole for coming.

In no time Mark was on the ground making out with a woman who continually hummed Grateful Dead songs, and laughed like a castrated hyena. He moved closer to the bonfire, and that was when he saw her. She was sitting on a rock, hugging a bottle of Hamm's between her bare feet and balancing a sketchbook on her knees. She was one of the handful of people still clothed, and she wasn't talking

about Plato as if he were a friend of the family.

He stood behind her, looking over her shoulder. He lit up a Merit and her head jerked around at the sound. She sat, for a minute, with her neck craned looking up to him. Slowly she smiled.

"Wouldn't happen to have another smoke, would you?" Her voice was deeper than he expected but he wanted to hear it again.

"Sure." Trying not to be too deliberately anxious, he pulled one out of the wrinkled blue package and handed it to her. From the light of the fire he saw her nails were short and her fingers were incredibly long. The frail dirty hands quickly took the smoke as she turned herself around.

"Thanks." She held out her other hand for the lighter, but he lit it for her. Seemed like a good idea to him at the time, but now he felt like some butthead Casanova.

He glanced at her sketchbook, now abandoned on the ground. Rough-edged figures of black danced across the page.

"Hope you didn't mind me looking over your shoulder."

"No, sure didn't. I don't think I've ever seen you here before."

"No, I'm sure you haven't. I'm Bill. Nice to meet ya." He stuck out his hand and she took it slower than she had taken the smoke.

"Hi, Bill. I'm Natalie." She smiled as she let go of his hand and made room on the rock.

He took a drag from the smoke and sat next to her.

"That's a really interesting drawing. It's got a nice quality about it." He was really disappointed that after six years of school "nice" was the only word he could muster.

"Thanks. Are you a student?"

"Yeah, I'm finishing my Masters this year. How about you?"

"Oh, I'll just be getting my B.A." He took a direct look at her pale oval face, and the long brown hair that framed it.

Now he nodded his head and checked his shoes. He was painfully aware of not being the master of chit-chat.

"So, you spend a lot of time out h—"

"Nat!" The yell of jubilation came from some obscure nude prancing across the field. "Nat, baby!"

As the figure ran closer Bill's heart fell with dread. In the light of the fire he saw it was a naked Rich Carthage who was embracing the shocked but unrepulsed Natalie.

"Hey Rich," she laughed as she gripped his naked back and then pulled him back to look at him. "What are you all excited about?"

"You, honey, what else?" Rich grinned and rolled a glazed eye. Then came the moment that Bill had been dreading since he heard the voice of his own personal hell.

"Bill? Is that you?"

He hung his head for a moment and then gathered the courage to raise it and smile. "Hi, Rich."

"Well fuck me runnin'! Bill Stein, at the hole!" Bill quickly made a mental note to kick Mark's ass later for dragging him here. "And there I was thinking I had seen it all here." Natalie cast Bill a quick glance, a look of sympathy.

"Just goes to show you shouldn't count your chickens, Rich." It was hard for Bill to fathom being nice at that point. Rich Carthage was the last person he usually wanted to see anytime, let alone now.

Bill knew him as the clown who was trying to be the William Burroughs of Scarsdale. He was a painter, and a damn good one at that, though one would be hard-pressed to ever get Bill to admit it. The two had come to incidentally share studio space for about six months in late '82, and memories of the whole experience gave Bill chills. He could still picture Rich crouched on the paint-stained, wooden floor shooting heroin and setting his canvases on fire in the gravel parking lot.

He hated everything Rich stood for. To Bill he wasn't quite the visionary that some made him out to be. He was

just a junkie with a brush. If anything could be found out of this chaotic state of mind, Bill questioned if Rich had the intelligence to recognize it.

Natalie quickly stood and grabbed Rich by the hand, "C'mon Rich, let's get something to drink."

"Damn good to see ya again, Bill! Come back naw, ya heer?" Rich pulled away from Natalie and shook Bill's hand with mock enthusiasm.

"C'mon Rich." Natalie grabbed Rich's arm and turned her back to Bill. They walked twenty shadowy paces through the grass while Rich babbled gibberish in her direction. Then she turned and looked back towards Bill sitting alone on the rock with a warm bottle of Hamm's spilled at his feet.

He pulled his sweating fingers away from the slick pages and set the magazine down. Slowly he got up and pushed open the window, flooding the brick room with the smell of wet grass and the chirp of crickets. What's the point of troubling over all this, he thought. He moved to the large white canvas and started to work.

It was slow methodical work. Carefully applied layer over even layer. Sometimes the thin pigment would seep into the surface like a sponge sucking water and cause a cloudy haze. The mistake would then have to be corrected: paint it out and reassert his original intent. Even though he tried not to think about the magazine on the floor behind him, his mind began to wander.

"Hey, Bill. You goin' out?" Mark sat on the couch lazily flipping channels, as Bill went from room to room.

"Yea." He was still a little pissed about "the hole", but too intent on getting out of the apartment to worry about it right now.

"Well, could you get some toilet paper? We're out. I had to wipe my ass with the quicker picker upper this morning." Bill took two quarters for coffee from the neat stack on his

desk and headed for the door. He got halfway out before Mark spoke again.

"Bill!" Jarred from his daze he whirled in the doorway.

"Yea."

"Did you hear me?"

"Huh. What...no."

"Man, what the hell has gotten into you? I asked if you could get some toilet paper while you're gone. We're out."

"Yea, sure."

"Are you all right, man?"

"Oh...yea. I'm fine. Gruber's just been bustin' my balls the last couple weeks. I gotta get to Lincoln and do some work." He felt anxious standing in the doorway. He wanted to be there already, even though Dr. Gruber hadn't said a word to him in the last month.

"All right. See ya later."

"Later." He bolted out the door and down the steps.

The Lincoln Art Center was a cavernous building. It had taken him almost all of his six years in Scarsdale to become used to the labyrinth of darkened halls and interconnecting rooms. He spent that whole day peering in unfrequented rooms and scanning clumps of strange faces. The image of Natalie looking back at him with that stoned and naked fool on her arm wouldn't leave his head. He wanted to find her. He wanted to find her here, on equal ground.

After three hours of inconspicuously hanging around foreign rooms, his vigilance paid off. He found her in the lounge smoking a menthol and drinking Squirt from a dented can. He tried to play it cool and act casual.

"Hi," he said, walking past her to the monolithic coffee machine.

"Hi."

She turned in her chair and watched him. He put a quarter into the slot with sweaty fingers. Pushing the plastic button he watched the paper cup fall and land tilted to one side. He quickly straightened it as the thin black stream came from above.

He would always look back on that moment and remember thinking that she was checking out his ass. She wasn't.

Taking the coffee he went to the table and sat down beside her. The room was empty except for them and he felt a slight air of confidence owing to the familiar surroundings.

"So, how's it goin'?" he asked, pulling out a smoke.

"Good. And you?"

"Can't complain, I suppose." He wanted to run a hand through her hair and see if it felt as soft as it looked.

"Hey, listen Bill, I kinda wanted to apologize for Friday night. Rich gets a little out of it sometimes and needs help, ya know? I didn't mean to blow you off."

"Naw, I know. I didn't think that."

"Yea, well, I still felt bad. I just didn't want him running off and hurting himself. Ya know?"

He couldn't be sure, but he was thinking that this was Natalie's way of telling him, she and Rich weren't an item. Why she would sympathize with him, however, he couldn't quite fathom.

"No, really, don't worry about it. I know how Rich can get." They both smoked in silence for a while, and Bill drank his coffee. While looking down at his shoes, he saw a stack of books sitting at her feet. His mind jumped to life when he saw a book of Ginsberg's poems on top.

"Oh, is this for a class?" He said reaching down and grabbing it.

"No, not really. I just really like his stuff." She paused for a second, and gave him an impressed look. "You know his work?"

"Oh yea, I love Ginsberg." He was lying, but he did remember liking *Howl*. He loved Kerouac, and in his mind that was close enough.

"Really?"

"Yea, great stuff." He absently flipped through the pages and put on a knowing face.

"Well, there's a reading tonight at a friend of mine's house. Would you like to come?"

"Sure." He smiled and filled his mind with thoughts of victory.

He pulled the brush away from the canvas and backed up. He hated it when he'd let his mind wander while at work. Looking at what he had accomplished, he couldn't believe his own eyes. Feeling an unexpected rage come, he hurled his brush at the slop he had created. Bill knew that what stood before him now looked like it came from Rich's wrist. He had completely lost control of the color. Dirty-browns blended with hot-pinks, and all was held together with a green, that looked like a stained institution wall.

Whirling violently he kicked the discarded magazine and screamed, "Bastard! I won! You sonofabitch!" His howl echoed off of the brick walls and his fit instantly died. The magazine had fluttered to the ground, open to the first page of the article. He could read the words from where he stood, "The Prolific Works of Richard C. Carthage".

The glossy picture looked nothing like him. His hair was short now, not the raggy mass Bill remembered. He wore a black, heavy Cardigan sweater, and khaki pants. Bill could still see him standing stoned and naked in bright orange firelight. He looked sane and healthy, standing in front of a painting that First Bank of New York had purchased for \$75,000 last fall.

Natalie had more or less moved into Bill's apartment by February of '85. The phone would ring nearly every night. He always sounded fine when he asked for her, never slurring a word. Once she was on the phone, he'd cry like a lonely child. He loved her, he needed her. The routine was always the same. Bill was sure the addiction had completely seized him. He didn't want to tell her that she couldn't talk to him, but he couldn't see the point in it either. That fall he jumped on the first job offer that came

along, just to get away from him.

He never noticed the way she had turned in the plastic bus seat and looked back towards Scarsdale, the day they left.

He sat in the studio and thought about waking up next to her every morning. Looking at the picture of Rich, he wondered how much Natalie had changed in the last seven years? Was she thinner then, or had she lost weight? He marveled at the way the people so close never seem to change. Natalie's face had been frozen in his mind seven years ago, and that was the face she would always wear.

Looking at his watch, he saw it was almost nine. He moved slowly to the canvas and lifted it off the wall. Carefully, he stashed it behind some of his old work. He figured there was no use in being haunted on a daily basis. Looking back at the stack of paintings he remembered the show he had at Millikin last year. He had moved one painting during that show. It pulled five grand, and he had been damn pleased about it at the time.

Now, as he cleaned his brushes, all he could think about was waking up tomorrow. He'd spend the whole damn day teaching college freshman how to draw. They paid him every month to pull them away from teddy bears and album covers, and teach them line, tone, and shape. Natalie would be there when he woke up, but he didn't really think about that.

He picked the defeated magazine off of the floor, and thumbed through it one last time. Rich had just had a sculpture installed at Berkeley. Bill wondered how much he had gotten for that?

"What the hell does *Art Day* know anyway?" He muttered to himself, turning it over in his hands. Moving to the garbage can he shoved it deep to the bottom.

He was washing his hands when she came in.

"Hi."

"Hi." She was wearing a skirt and heels. Bill wondered

when she had started carrying a purse, and why he hadn't noticed.

"So how'd it go tonight?" she said, turning and looking about aimlessly.

"Alright." He stared straight ahead and dried his hands. "How was work?"

"Alright."

"You ready?"

"Yeah."

They moved towards the large metal door that led to the parking lot.

"You wanna pick up something to eat on the way home?" he asked clicking off the lights.

"Sure."

"Where do you wanna stop?"

"I don't know. Where do you wanna stop?"

"I don't know." He slammed the door, and thought about Ginsberg and Greyhound stations as he snapped the grey padlock into place. "Let's just go by Leo's and pick up a pizza."

"Alright."

They climbed into the car. Natalie drove, like always. As they pulled out of the parking lot and down the road, Bill couldn't help but turn and watch the brick building disappear into the distance.



XIAOWEN CHEN



YAWNING MAN

DRY POINT PRINT

SHADD MARUNA

*I'm writing my own elegy (eulogy?), NOT because I think all of us spend our entire lives writing our own elegies (eulogies?) or any of that other crap. I'm just doing it because I don't want some other idiot doing it.*

## Elegy

(Taken out of context, this will seem crude—perhaps even offensive—so don't)

#1 I beat the

shit

out of a guy named Walters  
in Taylor's basement on 23rd.

#2 I read slowly, wrote quickly, and tried to stay quiet  
in large groups.

#3 I woke up and there wasn't anyone else fighting for  
space. Thought it out, remembered why, was damn  
thankful. This old bed was only meant for one. It's more of  
a cot than anything else. Wire frame squeaks and swings,  
the mattress is brown on both sides, sunk-in something  
fierce in the middle, and damned comfortable at the right  
angle. The fella who lived here before me just left it.  
He seemed the drifter type.

Had no posters or pictures, packed up his stuff in a night,  
smiled, shook my hand, and hit the road: green station  
wagon, bad moustache, little overweight.

Turns out

he'd lived here 12 years—or so says the Jewish (Italian?)  
the pretty lady down  
the hall. Twelve years and she hadn't once seen the inside  
of this room until

I moved in. Whole place is like that. Fucking these people

is like waking the dead, because there's no common enemy,  
no prick landlord from the burbs, no tyranny except our own stupidity. Landlady lives on Four—she's a goddamn freak show, too. Reads a lot of porn. Talks about her mother wanting to meet me all the time. Then closes the door real quick

so I can't see inside. She talks to the old broad on a Fisher-Price walkie-talkie thing strapped to her hip, Ma never talks back. Carries another gizmo that's like a constant monitor, so you can hear

the old broad wheezing and rolling around—all the time—as this landlady's talking to you. The first night I got here, she's carrying a *Penthouse* in the left hand, this wheezing-mother monitor in the other, and I'm starting to get a woody like nobody's business. Thin walls or not, I say to myself: this is the place, and I've been here ever since.

#4 And if you're ever in Cleveland, at the airport, talking about how I died, be sure to tell the Donald who drives the shuttle that I was one of those ship's captains who disregarded the weather reports and headed out on Erie in a storm like in the song.

## Sales Survey

I just tell my people everyday, "We're not talking about building customers here, we're talking about building *trustomers*."

First off, never bet against a man who calls himself, "The Kid."

I had a client once—a paying client, who'd ordered once and was ready to buy again—and I looked him straight in the face—just straight in the face—and I said, "Sir, I'm sorry, but you don't need our product. With your overhead and the type of folks you're looking at in the Midwest—they were a real small operation, maybe 20 heads max, all strictly blind sales—I said, really, you'd be better off waiting a few months, play out this slump, look for the X-mas bounce, then maybe—just maybe—you give me a call then. He thanked me. I said goodbye. And, two months later, he calls and orders three times his usual package. And you know what he says to me? He says, "Barry, thank you so much." He says, "If it weren't for you, Barry, you know—I mean—I *know* I can trust you, because, you were so *honest* with me. I've never had nobody in sales ever tell me 'no' before. I owe you one," he says. "I owe you one."

The birthday's the trick. You get the birthdays right off. I don't care how old these folks are, somebody remembers your birthday, especially some sales guy, and that's worth all the gold in California, there.

Boston probably, or else Rhode Island—what's that city there? Got to love a state that small. My husband talks about New Mexico all the time. We drive through there on our way to Dallas. Says he likes

the way the place sounds—he's big into Westerns. I just know all the roads too well. I've never been to the East Coast—unless you count Florida.

Secondly, you got to stick it to them before they stick it to you. If you don't come to play, don't even show up.

You got one chance—one—to make that sale, but you don't know when that chance is. For some folks it's BOOM, the minute you walk in the door—you get 'em fast and you got 'em. You wait, give 'em time to think and they are history, my friend. Another guy, he needs you to stroke him, nice and gentle, hour on hour, "Oh, you're the man," "This place is so great," "You're on the move," "Nother scotch?" then BOOM, he's yours.

And the trick—the trick ain't trying to figure out which type you got, the trick is getting in those faces with that pitch over and over again until it works. You start the pitch when you get up in the morning. And it don't end until your old lady rolls over for the cigarette. That's the trick.

And, yes, there are those times, sure, when you just want to be looked at, you know? By a man, by an attractive man. I mean, I'm a happily married woman. Happily married. And I love my husband. But there is something about being admired—sincerely—being looked at, that confirms your existence, you know? Says, "Hello, I see you. I'm glad you're here."

Zig Ziglar, I guess. Just his "can do" philosophy and the way he can look at life and everything. I like that. I mean, my mother taught me a lot, too, but Ziglar really iced it all.

Never.

Never ever ever ever. Not once, never. Not even when I could have, you know?

Two. One's in college—David. The other's in the Navy. Our sailor son. Great kids. David lives with his mother. He wants to go into sales. That's what his mother says. I just think, "No, no, no, son." I mean, there's a lot of life out there to see. He's only 25 years old. When I was 25, I didn't want to be no salesman. But it's his life and he's got some time left I suppose.

Sure. You get all sorts of thoughts on the road. You see enough loonies and nuts—the freaks in those nickel theaters, the men dressed like women, women dressed like men, that crazy stuff. Makes me more and more happy every time I come home. And Rosie doesn't understand why I want to chain and padlock the doors, you know?

Third, and most important, they're just people, right? No different than you. Just people.

If you're rolling down a mountain—say, you're a rock or something, I don't know—but say you are. Do you get faster or slower? You get faster. But if you're climbing that mountain, how's it go? You ever climb a mountain? You start out all pumped, got your new boots, new hat, you're all excited. "Oh, this is great. I love it." By the time you're halfway up, though, what happens? Not so easy, is it? Your legs are getting tired, you're looking around for a walking stick, wondering why in hell you didn't just stay home and catch that Hawks game, right? Am I right? But what happens if you do finish that climb? and you do get to the top of that mountain, huh? What

happens? You get to the top, that's what. And it's damn pretty up there. Windy, I guess and cold—just depends on where you climb, I guess, but it's real nice and you got there slow, but it was worth it. And when you get home, you can say you made it all the way up, and I'm telling you, that's worth all the gold in California, there.

## Today

*Light is sustained by the  
material consumption of its  
body.*

—Norman Wacker

The light was somewhere else,  
busy flirting with Turner evenings  
and Monet the next morning  
after rain and scattering itself  
over the grass for them.

Mockingbird's every-song marked  
out a space, a bed  
and warmth where the light  
wasn't paying attention.

The woman walked over the scattered  
light, the tiger stripes  
and fawn dapples of it, to  
enter opposite a man.

At least today, that was  
how it was.

He smelled of cut grass  
and promise, and raised  
an open hand to her. At least  
today, open and cool.

This twilight clings to you  
and pulls my eyes over  
your features,  
she murmured  
in the closing distance  
between them.

It could have been twilight,  
if the light had paid attention,  
but it was off warming its frozen  
scenes in paintings somewhere.

At least today I am  
with this one who  
hears the every-song  
and hums it to me.

She thought this with her eyes closed,  
kissing his breast bone because  
it was within reach now.

At least today the every-song is your skin,  
she said.

He called light over  
to the skin on her belly, and then  
he warmed the glow of her.  
She began to scatter over the grass.

She touched the light that  
hung there on his mouth  
the way it hangs in water. She showed  
him the flower of his mouth,  
hummed the every-song.

At least today,  
they were like this.

## Angel in Scorpio

Surely, over its crimson wing, the phoenix looks  
back at history for a mother it can't find  
and then forward again, having touched  
no event and yet marked time,  
a clock to that expanse.

Old now and heat rises  
from the crow, a warning of time's  
end. The golden flecked body  
no longer hungers for frankincense.  
The habit, the pile of embers waits.

The phoenix beds down and curls  
beak to tailfeather in  
a fetal purpose. It exhales  
from that bright chest the heat  
of such age that silver cords spider  
out, weave an egg  
that opens in red and smokeless  
glow that releases  
time and the firebird, who flies  
from the tomb of the sun.

Also of the desert are scorpions,  
who would rather plant their own  
stingers behind their heads,  
welcome death straight  
than think, *Darkness fiercer than wind  
on fire, and nothing could subdue me  
in such deep struggle.*

To some dark warmth a woman comes  
and folds her invisible wings. Gentle, she

burrows into loam and clay, curls nose to knee,  
welcomed to the song there. She breathes

seldom and jostles memory  
for some shining moments, searches  
history for what brought her here.  
Slowly, for each sparkling thought's  
melody she threads oak or rose briar  
roots, weaves a veined egg  
and closes in so much air.

Nestled she finds her forgotten wings,  
wraps them, soft as ash or mother's  
skin, around her body. She  
begins, and the legend  
spreads wings behind  
her bluing eyelids. The water  
and blood weep from her pores. The milk  
no mouth will taste fills  
the egg like a white  
and fuels a burning that warms  
her like desire. Her flesh  
glows and is red embers, unmarked  
by time and blanketed in the ashes  
of her wings.

A woman emerges,  
eager and hungry for flight.  
She closes the ground  
over her mother's ashes and thinks,  
*When does a thing cease to begin?*  
while time dances like a silk ribbon  
over her shoulder.

## A Second's Glance

*But what matter whether I was born or not, have lived  
or not, am dead or merely dying, I shall go on doing as  
I have always done, not knowing what it is I do, nor who  
I am, nor where I am, nor if I am. Yes, a little creature,  
I shall try and make a little creature, to hold in my arms,  
a little creature in my image, no matter what I say.*

—Samuel Beckett, **Malone Dies**

Alfred peered through the shrouded window like a curious teenager peeking at the centerfold of a *Hustler* magazine. In the streets below, people hustled from one shop to the next attempting to complete a week's worth of errands during their one-hour lunchbreak. He felt like an outcast. Every once-in-a-while he noticed that two suited people in tennis shoes would run into each other, flash a smile of recognition and a hello, and continue quickly about their business. He dreamt that they knew each other from an aerobics class or the PTA. Alfred felt like a shadow or a ghost, existing outside of reality, content to observe; no one could perceive him to draw him in. Sometimes it bothered him. When he would escape from his dark bare apartment and impose himself on that world, he wanted to know what it would feel like to hear a familiar voice that came from a face that he knew and that knew him. Instead, he always found people stepping around him like a puddle of broken glass. They spoke over or through him, piercing him with their eyes; people shared experiences and ideas with each other—calling out their names, but no one beckoned to Alfred. He had a mind. For God's sake, he had a Ph.D.! What did they want? His mind was filled with ideas just waiting to be shared. He was sure he could help solve some of their problems; he was sure he could contribute to their discussions.

He often wondered if his soul was mistakenly put into the wrong body. He believed he should have been a bird,

an owl; he wanted to soar above this fake world into a world where neither materialism nor popularity mattered. An escape from the human realm is what he wanted most; what he needed most was to become a part of it. But they were not willing to let him join.

He turned from the window and padded across the hard-wood floor to the other side of the room, passing the lumpy futon and the kitchen, settling on the sawed-off bar stool whose limbs were attached with disintegrating duct tape. In front of him sat his computer, a Mac SE/30; the screen was empty, but the machine hummed as always. This is what he did every day: sat and wrote papers and articles on his computer. But no one would ever read them, because for this he would have to deal with the world, or, even worse, he would have to validate it and recognize himself as part of it. His greatest fear was becoming a household name, then people would hold expectations of him, and he could not deal with the possibility of failure, or worse, the possibility that their expectations would guide him, leading him to work for their acceptance. Still, this fear didn't stop him from writing. The computer's hard disk was full, and he needed to expand its storage, but his empty bank account made him decide he could wait; he would use floppy disks in the meantime. Littered with full labelless 3.5 inch floppy diskettes, the plywood desk buckled under the weight of the contents of Alfred's mind. His thoughts, ideas, memories, and observations of the world below were scattered haphazardly, spilling under his feet onto the splintering floor.

Excessively bored by this lonely day-after-day monotony, Alfred accessed the painting and design program. He decided to make a drawing: a creation that would be real to him, a personal utopic world where he would feel comfortable all of the time, where he would not be scared to leave his apartment, where he could talk to anyone he wanted, and they would not be afraid to talk to him.

He began by making a little man. A man that looked just

like him: shaggy black hair parted on the side to expose his smooth ramp-like forehead, thick corrective lenses framing his too-big eyes, button-down plaid shirt like gauze at the elbows, too big chinos choked tight with a leather belt, and dingy black leather loafers with peel-away soles. Even so, he was in style because this was his world. What did it matter anyway? The little man had no one to impress.

He liked the little man. He made the little man stand on his head. He gave the little man the power to move around the screen. The little man almost appeared truly alive, though he moved with strobe-like smoothness. Alfred laser-printed the little man's existence, cloning him for his wall but on paper the little man lost his charm. He did not seem as animated or joyful; he was drawn out of his world. Alfred crumpled-up the little man's image and heaved the ball toward a growing pile of similar crumplings. Little friend safe behind screen, Alfred chose not to torture him by pulling him into this cold, stained world.

As if attempting to validate his new friend's existence, or baptize him, Alfred decided the little man needed a name. Having named only one other object, his computer, Mac, the task of naming a person would require more creativity, a greater imagination than Alfred's mind had ever conjured or obeyed. Alfred searched through the abyss of his cerebral cortex for an appropriate name but only managed to excavate trite names, names that everyone in his family already had: Bob, Matthew, Thomas, John, Dave. He wanted the little man to be an original, but feared that this world had stifled any creativity that he might have ever had. However, after much research and deliberation, he named the little man Chip. This name was appropriate, respecting his world as well as his origin. Alfred believed that the name Chip was perfect: simple, yet loaded with personality.

Preoccupied with Chip and his world, Alfred began neglecting the duties and responsibilities he had to his world: taking out the trash, paying the bills, grocery

shopping, washing the dishes, eating. His little diversion had become an obsession, and he no longer followed a life schedule. He slept sporadically, and spent the majority of his time watching Chip, staring at the little man on the other side of the computer screen in the world where Alfred believed he himself belonged, if he belonged at all.

After a few days of just watching Chip, Alfred noticed his bare computer world, and drew his eyes away from Chip for a while in order to concentrate on improving the world. First, he gave Chip a bed; at least now he had something that was all his own: a place where he could go whenever he became bored of exploring the screen, a place to rest, a place to think. Next, Alfred created a house for Chip. It was the house that Alfred dreamed of owning one day: a two-story, two-bedroom stucco. Alfred pictured it in the mountains, but the computer screen would suffice for now, and with a click of the mouse Alfred lifted the bed into the master bedroom. The other bedroom Alfred decorated as a study: he gave Chip a little Mac and lined the walls with full bookshelves. Believing that he had given Chip all that one needed to survive, books and a computer, Alfred was happy. His little friend had a place to live and something to do.

While Alfred modified Chip's world, Chip explored even further. Though he was simply a compilation of lights on a computer screen, Chip began to formulate ideas, and he realized that he was alone; he wanted someone to share his ideas with. Chip spent a little time on the Mac, but most of the time he freed his mind to wander along the words, across the pages, and into the worlds of the books, allowing himself to dream of a life in these other worlds where he wasn't alone. Chip seemed to develop a personality all his own, almost to the point of being human, untarnished by the fantasy world Alfred was creating. And Alfred was content, once again, to spend hours staring at the screen, watching Chip plod about his daily activities, watching him read, watching him sleep, watching him climb and descend

the stairs. For Alfred, Chip's life held entertainment value only, though he found himself becoming somewhat attached to the life within the screen: the life he created, the life he named, the life he longed to call his own, in the world where he belonged.

As night approached, Alfred readied himself for a replenishing sleep; his mind rested on the comfort of the futon while his body wandered mechanically through his flat, flipping electric switches, his fingers mindlessly reached around the back of the Mac to the power switch. In a frenzy, he scolded himself aloud; as if by shutting down the computer he would actually commit a murder. With one hand on his forehead and the other wrapped around the computer, hugging it, Alfred apologized profusely to Chip, begging forgiveness. Even though he knew his little friend could not hear him, Alfred often sensed that Chip knew someone else existed, watching. To prevent any other near-fatal errors, Alfred approached the futon; lying prone, he didn't even notice the bed's mountainous lumps before he plunged into sleep.

During Alfred's sleep, Chip grew tired of this new world and he desired something new to explore; having always remained within the confines of his house, he spent most of his time reading in the study or on his bed. Though he was gaining knowledge, he was also learning that there were other people besides him in the world, and he dreamt of having someone to listen, as well as listen to. He had never heard a voice: his or anyone else's. Rather than spending his time in the rooms that he knew too well, he began opening doors. He found closets, a laundry room, two bathrooms, a basement, and a door that opened into nothingness. But rather than explore the empty world, Chip roamed through the basement and other rooms, decorating his world to feel more comfortable, to feel less estranged. He printed pictures from the computer and re-arranged the furniture. He even tried to move his bed into the basement, but found it much too heavy and awkward, and was nearly



pinned against the wall as it tumbled freely to the first landing.

Alfred awoke the next morning with a crook in his neck from having slept too solidly, and instead of hopping up to see what Chip was doing he remained on the futon, waiting for sleep's fetters to dissolve or someone to yank him out of bed, into reality. His mind wandering, he realized he had become much too involved in creating and watching his little friend. He needed to re-establish a life-schedule. In the same instant, his thought fragmented and skipped to Chip: he wondered if Chip was lonely. He felt he had missed an important part of Chip's life, like a mother who misses her child's first steps. Exploding from the futon, Alfred rushed to the computer only to find the ideal world he created in total disarray and Chip sitting on the house's front doorway, elbows balancing on his knees, hands cradling his chin in apathy, eyes staring into nothingness. Alfred knew that he would have to extend his ideal world and create a neighborhood for Chip to explore, something new away from the tedium of his constrained reality.

Alfred approached the house from the front and was appalled by the bareness that surrounded it; it was as if the house grew out of nothing. Four walls surrounded by nothing. Not grey, not white, not black, just nothing. There was no ground, no porch, nothing outside the door of the house, no hint that it could even sustain a life—now that's an exit. Even the house itself needed work, shutters or something. He began by creating a porch, just two steps up to the door and not big enough for a swing but maybe a lawnchair. Extending from the bottom step, Alfred drew a walkway that led to a black-top driveway, and at the end of the driveway nearest the house, he created a tremendous two-car garage. The world Alfred turned on appeared more and more to mirror the world where his parents raised him: the garage was that garage, the driveway was that driveway, and the walkway was that walkway. However, Alfred halted his expansion project as he became distracted by a

few slight modifications that the existing foundation required; he added shutters to the windows, lined the walkway and porch with flowers, and placed a large oak in the front yard. He hoped this would please Chip and lead him to find more interest and excitement in his existence.

The next time Chip opened the door that previously led to nothingness he surprisingly found an entire part of his world that remained unexplored, and Alfred delighted in watching his little friend enjoy and interact with the surroundings he had created for him. As Chip surveyed the tree, the porch, the flowers, walkway, driveway, and garage, he couldn't help but wonder if there was an overwhelming force that oversaw all that he did, took care of his needs, and actually created him and the world from the nothingness that he once found on the other side of the door. No sooner had he wondered than he quickly stashed these thoughts aside and strolled around the new corner of his little world, down the two steps, along the walkway, up the driveway and into the bare garage. On his way back to the house he picked three of the daisies from beside the path, put them in a glass of water, and placed it on his kitchen table.

Alfred noticed that the extension of Chip's world didn't change anything except Chip began spending a lot of time staring beyond the boundaries of his world or just reading on the porch. Chip's dissatisfaction with life became quite apparent to Alfred and concerned him to the point that he considered creating a girlfriend for Chip to interact with. Even though Alfred and Chip never had communicated, Alfred feared that this girlfriend would interfere with the development of his and Chip's relationship. He didn't want his little friend to have someone else to spend his time with, someone who could get close to him, someone who could share his thoughts; so he selfishly refused the one particular gift that would offer Chip happiness. Alfred experienced jealousy for the first time. As a comparable substitute to companionship, Alfred created a few new books for the

shelves and began to draw a plan for expanding the world even further, while Chip's loneliness fueled his pain and despondency.

Alfred started noticing Chip staring into the screen as if he could see out just as Alfred could watch Chip inside; he began to question whether Chip perceived him or might be developing contempt for him. Alfred's intention to expand Chip's world became distracted by his fear that Chip knew Alfred created him; and Alfred justified this fear because Chip glanced away from the screen whenever Alfred turned toward it, avoiding Alfred's glance that indicated he knew Chip was watching. This just reinforced to Alfred that his little friend had developed a real personality, real emotions, real thoughts, real needs; people in his world would reject this as impossible and suggest that Alfred be institutionalized. Even so, Alfred believed it. This, Alfred thought, is just one of the reasons why Chip was fortunate to live in his own world where he didn't have to deal with the close-mindedness of society, but Chip could never realize this as long as he did not experience it.

Chip's attitude began to put a strain on Alfred almost to the point of desperation: nothing was good enough for him, he was never satisfied with anything that Alfred created for him. Alfred could not understand what more Chip could want except a friend, and since Alfred had learned to live without friends, and since Alfred feared Chip's rejection, his emotions prevented him from giving this. Alfred believed that he had already gone out of his way to create the ideal world for Chip, a world where Alfred knew he would be happy with his life. Though he grew thoroughly annoyed with Chip's ungrateful attitude, Alfred also grew attracted to Chip's development of human characteristics; he never expected this could be fostered by a computer. Instead of expanding Chip's world he tossed the plans aside and regained his obsession with the little creation; Alfred regressed to spending every moment in front of the computer, staring at the little life milling about behind the

pane of glass. Alfred believed that the two worlds were merely separated by a piece of glass, like an aquarium containing fish or hamsters, and that he and Chip breathed the same air particles, felt the same rays of the sun. Alfred wanted to get closer, to actually communicate and associate with Chip in his world. Occasionally he would reach up his index finger to touch the screen as if he could pierce it and feel Chip's contours, the flowers, or one of the many books which he hadn't read but Chip had. Just once, Alfred wished that he would sense gratitude from Chip, for such an incredibly peaceful life in an incredibly peaceful world, that Chip would look at him at the same time he stared at Chip, that their eyes would meet; he was confident he would discern then whether Chip knew that he existed. Chip avoided this confrontation; what he wanted was a shot at revenge for this boring, lonely life he had been tossed into, a life that offered him nothing but loneliness, no goals, no purpose, no love.

Waiting for that moment when a lifetime of communication would be exchanged through a second's glance, Alfred remained on the stool, fixed his eyes on Chip, wrapped his fingers around the upper corners of the monitor, and placed his thumbs on the upper corners of the screen. Chip stood motionless reading with his back to Alfred and refused to acknowledge his existence for several hours. Alfred waited, slow shallow breaths, crawling pulse, eyes like razors working to slice through the barrier. Then, as if responding to a signal Chip mechanically pivoted on his feet, dropped his arms, and raised his head; his eyes pierced the screen supernaturally. Alfred felt something had been stolen from him, that he had been raped by the second's glance that lasted hours in Alfred's mind. Its power forced him to close his eyes, as if this would protect him from losing what had been taken, and shake his head to jolt him back to reality.

Opening his eyes, Alfred gazed upon his own image glaring in return as if he peered into a looking glass. With

dormant heart lodged in throat, he timidly moved his head from side to side; the image on the other side of the glass refused to follow. At that moment he knew what had happened.

The lips on the face of the image on the other side of the screen curved tightly into a subtle grin as Alfred recognized the two-story, two-bedroom stucco, the books, and the flowers which drooped sadly on the kitchen table. He didn't know what to do, say, or feel. He couldn't even feel betrayed. After all, this was his ideal world.

Alfred stared through the screen as he did so many hundreds of times before, this time in reverse and this time he didn't want to be there. He believed that Chip would regret the switch when he discovered how good life was here on the other side of the screen, after he knew the pain offered by the world on the other side of the door. Alfred was stunned by the ease with which Chip arose from the chair and dressed himself, it appeared as if Chip did this every day of his life, as if he had these very actions planned in his mind and now lived them with practiced fluency. Why wasn't Chip intrigued with Alfred the way Alfred was with Chip? Alfred shook off these questions and waited for life in the real world to impose on Chip the same as it had on him.

Chip left the apartment and entered the real world head-on, taking with him all of Alfred's credentials, his money, his clothes his identity and the freedom Alfred denounced. Because only their souls switched bodies, to the rest of the world Chip was Alfred, Alfred was Chip, and (as before) they could care less whether Alfred existed. While Chip was gone, Alfred rearranged the furniture reforming the continuity he had originally created, before Chip distorted it; he remained resting on the couch, pondering his new situation, trying to decide whether it was good or bad, beneficial or detrimental, living or dying.

When Chip returned, Alfred noticed that he had found the market and bought some milk, fresh vegetables, bread,

and other staples that Alfred got only on Thursdays. After Chip put the food away and cleaned the apartment, he splashed some of Alfred's untouched cologne on a relatively new silk button-down and left Alfred behind again. By this time, Alfred had picked a book to read although he had a hard time guiding his mind through the plot. He read on and off for several hours clearing a meager seventeen pages because of his constant worry for Chip; Alfred felt betrayed. He didn't understand how Chip could forget about him and leave him when, for the last two weeks of his life, everything Alfred did revolved around his little friend Chip. He worked to convince himself that he didn't need to understand because Chip would soon detest his new life and come begging for advice, willing to right any wrongs he committed.

Well after midnight, Chip staggered into the apartment (with the same mechanical stride he displayed in the computer) and crashed on the futon. Alfred had waited up for him fearing that Chip was unprepared to deal with the world, especially after dark. Though he relaxed when Chip shuffled through the door alive, a fire burned within him, ready to explode: not because Chip had obviously been to a bar and was loaded, or because he had taken all of Alfred's money and spent it on alcohol, but because he probably had more fun than Alfred could ever remember experiencing in the thirty-six years of his life.

The next day Alfred felt the same sting. Chip slept late and battled his first hangover, then cleaned up and left Alfred to himself again. Instead of attempting to read, Alfred approached the computer and, believing that he could correct the mistakes he made in his first attempt at creating a loyal friend, he decided to try again. This time he created the little man employing his knowledge that the little man could observe everything Alfred did on the other side of the screen. He didn't stop with the body of the little man; Alfred constructed fragment by fragment, bit by bit the details of his appearance and soul attempting installing dedication,

kindness, caring, and honor (all of the qualities that Chip failed to acquire) into his new friend's character. Alfred also taught the little man to communicate: when Alfred waved at the computer the little man waved a response. Already, Alfred related more to this new little friend than he ever related to Chip.

Just as Alfred finished creating for the evening and prepared for bed, Chip strutted through the doorway of the apartment; he wasn't drunk, but he ushered a woman into the apartment, and they were obviously attracted to each other. Alfred gawked jealously from the other side of the screen, questioned what Chip had that attracted women that he didn't, and found himself unable to remove his eyes from the couple mauling each other on the futon. Chip became distracted and confused by the sensation that someone was watching. As he searched for the source of the distraction through windows and doors, he found Alfred attentively observing their activities from behind the same screen that once protected Chip and eventually purged him into the world. Obviously annoyed, Chip arose from the molded futon, stepped purposefully across the room and stood before the computer. Grinning the same grin that welcomed Alfred into his new world, Chip disapprovingly shook his right index finger at the screen, reached behind the computer, flipped the switch, and watched contentedly as Alfred faded to a whirlpool of light, a dot, and then disappeared from the screen.

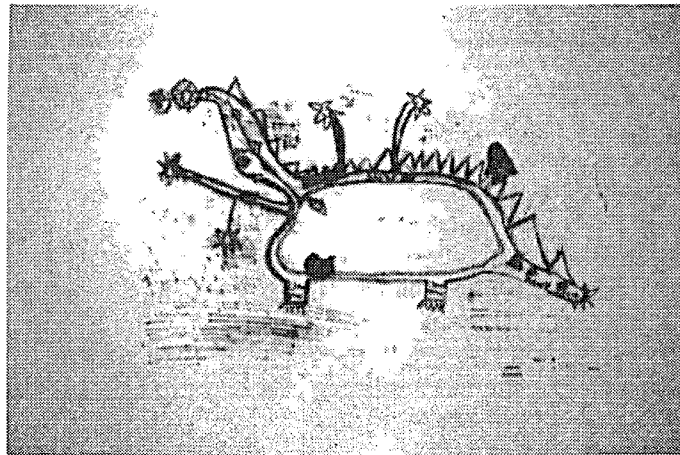
## The Neighbors

They scream and rage  
above me constantly.  
I hear glass shatter,  
words like shards,  
pummeled in their walls,  
the floor, tattered furniture.  
Soon it will grow,  
so that no matter  
where they go,  
cuts will find them,  
shred them.

And yesterday they giggled,  
like small children  
at a marshmallow camp;  
they forget these moments  
every other day.  
And I, I wonder at them,  
wonder at my love.

On their day of vows,  
these bruises existed  
only in a childhood  
long forgotten.  
Will mine, like theirs,  
resurface, come back  
to haunt me,  
slicing my skin, love?

NIK VALLAS



UNTITLED

LITHOGRAPH

JEANNE BRODIE

## Prince Charming in the Land of Emotion

You say that word to me  
every day, at least ten times,  
in ten different ways,  
you realize I say thank-you, or  
"I know you do"—  
something to escape a real  
response.

I looked it up in the dictionary,  
Like, lock, lonely, lousy,  
Love—"strong affection or liking  
for someone or something,"  
"a passionate affection for  
one of the opposite sex."

So, I look for passionate,  
I pass up pass,  
passionate:  
"having or showing strong feelings,  
hot tempered"—oh yes

temper, I know that,  
my dad had that.  
Let's look up alone.

You

narrowed objects to the very details  
in the poems. For example,  
if you wrote about cigarettes—  
depicted the dots on the filter.  
And summer was not a summer,  
but something making compresses  
by its rain on our foreheads.

I also got my portion—  
I was narrowed, materialized,  
pressed into white pages  
by the threads of gnawed buttons,  
the wind in the raincoat's folds  
and the long twist on eyelashes.

You narrowed the world of extremity,  
cutting and hacking perception  
into the tiniest parts.  
And my cries were getting tangled,  
and my damnations were breaking  
in the chains of your dots.

\* \* \*

God is leaving. Asphalt and puddles.  
And hundreds of trampled roads.  
Even if I jump on my head,  
how will He notice? He is the God.

Someone will grin nearby:  
"One should realize who is with whom."  
And I have in response only one prayer  
in an incomprehensible language.

I'll be the first to throw stones.  
God is leaving. It's up to Gods.  
I'll stay, balancing in my hands  
one prayer...a handful of stones.

## Wanderings

How I want to stay alone!  
To roam along the camp of the dark streets,  
to stay alone,  
to howl under the moon,  
homeless.

You cried: "Don't torment!  
Abandon! Leave me!"  
Alone. Alone. Great...  
In the stars there are outlines  
of someone's mug  
and the moon is shining  
*like an ass-hole.*

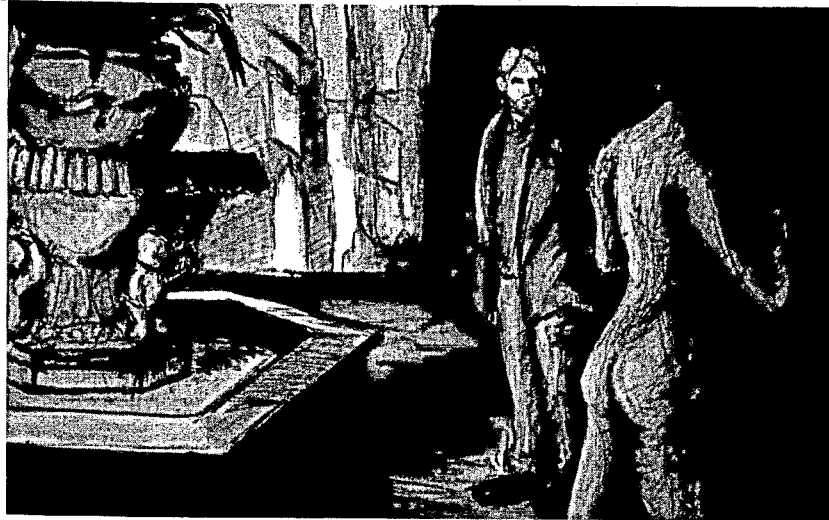
How strange—to roam by yourself.  
All the passers-by are gazing at me, grinning...  
while the banal word "beloved"  
will be getting greasy in your pockets,  
there where the sea-waves are tickling  
the coast's multi-colored panel,  
where the males are homeless and loose,  
where under the rocks there is a nude beach,  
there your conscience is clean.  
I'm glad. I'm glad. I'm happy.  
I am, by myself, more straight than a pole  
and more festive than a parade!  
An unhappened occasion of our nights  
will come true in my boasts and lies...  
And the wind in my lips: "Stop torment. You're given  
hundreds of better nights."  
Thank you. I'm accepting...  
So, until I burn out my homeless feet  
I toss from windows to posts,  
tearing and crumpling  
the dark streets

and leaves, which at one time stuck  
to our

wet

foreheads.

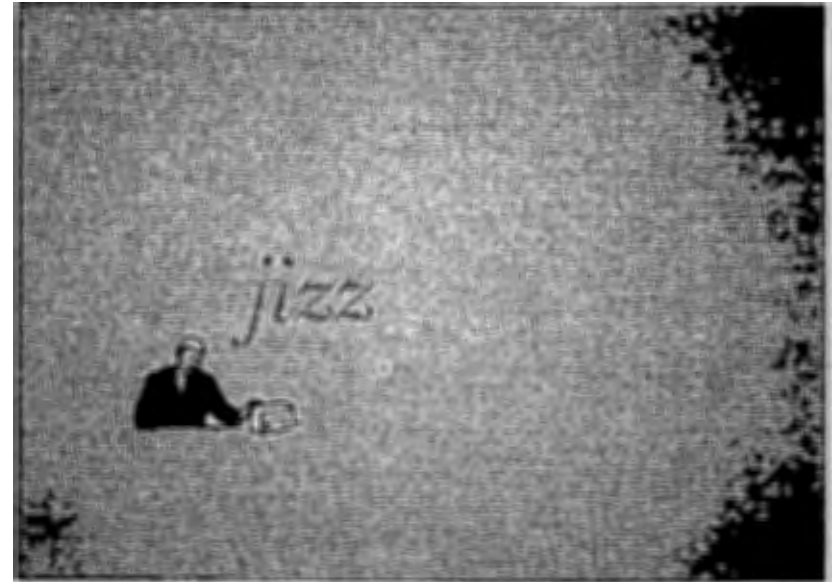
RYAN SCOTT McCULLAR



UNTITLED

PASTEL ON PAPER

ST. CLOVE



Jazz

DRAWING



watercolors

Collect me within your  
soft camel hair, dipping  
and sliding among  
legs and pores.

Suspend me at the tip of your  
brush, a round heavy  
sack holding  
the dissolve—colors  
of your burden.

Smear me with your  
tongue across  
the emptiness.

Fill my  
(w)hole with myself.

The Ghost

For each morning you wake  
unrested, haunted,  
I am  
the feeling in your gut,  
the dream  
you can't remember:

I only see this house  
at night, entering  
long after you've fallen  
asleep, your eyes  
having already twitched  
to exhaustion, your dreams  
already loose.

I search through  
your cupboards, finding  
I'm not hungry  
for what you have to offer,  
roam your house, find  
your family in photographs,  
memorize their faces  
and your life story.

As I move, my sounds  
seep into your dreams:  
opening doors  
fill you with horror,  
closing them  
is the dream of death,  
the cold draft  
curls you into a ball,  
if I touch you  
you're falling off a cliff.

In the morning,  
you roll over, not yet  
awake, mumbling of my visit.  
When conscious,  
you will not remember  
your dreams, you will feel  
restless, you will know  
that I will return,  
faithful as the night.

## Graveyard

The only movements here are birds  
as they disappear in a bush  
or the deer when they float  
through the dark woods.

This is where the farm families  
come to rest after years filled  
with seasons to wear them down.  
They will come here til it is full.

This is where the Meyers are,  
nearly a dozen of them now,  
all stemming from you, George and Anne,  
the Adam and Eve of the first three rows.

George and Anne, your names  
are hard to read, rubbed off your stone.  
The harsh weather that took your life  
will not suppose you far enough gone.

But you are not worried there in your grave,  
you've beaten the weather with death.  
When your name is too faint to be read,  
great-grandchildren will bring it here again.

## Huis Clos

We have driven this road before:  
endless miles of McDonalds  
and truckstops. Grease  
and gas and AM radio.

Interchangeable Vistas:  
bleak post-corn Illinois  
fall and Texas summer cotton;  
or Oklahoma oil wells sitting  
naked and defenseless. Unused.  
Such is the fate of mankind.

We have fought this battle before:  
advancing and retreating  
in a strategic symposium  
of differing needs  
of similar values.

Recriminations and accusations:  
shouted over the sound  
of late night strange city talk-radio;  
we keep time to the beat  
of insects dying on our windshield.

We have seen such sights before:  
bloody hearts of suicides  
die dreaming of a simpler time;  
summers in Maine or hot honey on homemade bread.  
Ancillary measures of faded power and irreducible glory:  
some truth-tellers tell of a time  
when truth was valued as much  
as a capital gain. Truant feelings  
left in the rain without a note from home.

KELLY FISHER LOWE

We speak. Literally—  
in terms of the blame.  
Quiet lies, unassigned.  
I watch you slowly  
fold the map.

JAY BURGESS

## Architecture of a Dream Lord

Kyer awoke early in the morning shrouded in dew. As he rose from the woven mat, laid carefully on a pile of fern limbs and leaves, his naked body steamed in the pre-dawn light of the jungle. After fasting the day before, his stomach felt empty and his whole body trembled in its extreme condition. Kyer's mind lacked its usual clarity. This was due in part to the sleeping on an angry, empty stomach, but more to the nervousness associated with his initiation into Elderhood. Kyer tried to remember all of the instructions his tutor gave him the night before, but was distracted when his brother came out of the thatched hut's rear exit. Soan Kama, who had passed into Elderhood only a year, decided to examine his brother on the tenth anniversary of his birth. Kyer had no choice but to accept the inspection because it was forbidden for him to speak this day.

"It will start soon, Kyer. You had best gather yourself or the circle won't accept you." Soan Kama's voice seemed more important since his initiation. Kyer remembered how he used to talk and raise his voice like other children, but Soan Kama rarely spoke since the white ring was painted around his chest, the mark of Elderhood. It was the long periods of silence in his speech that either made him think more between utterances, or made the words more valuable because of their rarity. Kyer was unsure of the cause of this significant change in his brother's behavior. He remembered that his oldest brother was killed and partially eaten by a leopard just a few days before Soan Kama's ceremony. Kyer wondered if the ceremony would change him in the same profound manner as it had his brother.

Kyer wondered what exactly were going to be the resulting changes of his ceremony. He tried to envision what he would look like with the ring painted around his underdeveloped chest. The ring rode high on Soan Kama, just under his armpits. The ring's height is a measurement from the ground up, so it occupied different positions on

each Elder, and the same position on all Elders. "Ease your mind, Kyer," Soan Kama urged in a more brotherly voice as he strode across the grassy clearing. "Remember the tenets of your training and they will return to you at the end illuminated by a light which makes the ambiguity seem more solid than the most logical of deductions." Soan Kama remained standing there for a while after speaking. The expressions on his face commanded the attention of Kyer, and seemed to flow with some purpose that his brother didn't quite understand. A minute or two later, Soan Kama left his brother alone in the clearing behind the hut.

Knowing that he was to stay outside until he heard the call of the community drum, Kyer reverted to thinking about his training. He remembered the first day, five long years ago, when his tutor brought him out into the heavier jungle. She drew a circle just around his feet and told him to remain there until he understood everything within the circle. Amita, Kyer's tutor, assured him that she would provide him with food and drink for the duration of the lesson. "One must fully comprehend the universe that he is born into before attempting to understand another" were her only words to Kyer during that lesson, which lasted a year and three days. Kyer remembered how his restlessness changed from physical to mental. Kyer recalled as well the day that Amita said, "A day will come when the first lesson will be lost, only a template for understanding the rest."

The circle was then slowly enlarged throughout the rest of the training. He recalled the day that he and Amita watched two praying mantises mate. He remembered the unsettling feeling that he had when the female bit the head off her partner. Kyer asked Amita why the female killed her partner if the purpose of reproduction was to enlarge the species' population. Amita replied, "Your reasoning is bound by your perspective, and as long as that is the case, you will never comprehend the amount of elements which make up a motive."

Kyer thought back to the day when the two of them

discovered Taeger's body in the sandalwood tree after the leopard had killed him. Amita told him that the jungle was taking its due payment for supporting the whole community. He was angered by the simple account of his brother's demise, and demanded a better explanation. Instead, Amita explained how the community fire is kept fueled. She told Kyer how they each take turns removing the feces from the pit where the people place it so it can dry. It is then shoveled into the fire as needed. Amita told Kyer that this process provides both fuel for cooking, as well as a clean way to dispose of the village's waste. Kyer remembered how she left him to think about that for a few days, and how it never quite settled. He became even more unsure of his ability to make the transition from child to Elder as other lessons began to flash into memory; failing to congeal into a substantial whole.

The drum sounded, and it was time for the ceremony to begin. Kyer could feel the dawn air tingle over his naked body. His feet sank deep into the soft soil and flora which covered the earth, toes gripping with each step. Walking around the hut, he could see the fecal fire near the center of the village. He looked inward at his community, and found it almost empty. This surprised him because all of the Elders are involved in the initiation. Kyer assumed this based upon his being locked in the hut and the Elders leaving during each of the ceremonies before his. Amita was there though, waiting alone for him next to the fire. The whole village was silent: no babies cried, no chatter of children at play, just the solitary sloshings of Amita stirring the pot of cud. As he walked slowly on, the air became thick with the smoke from the boiling cud: a concoction of sprouts, flowers, roots, and fungus growths, which was the staple of the Elders' diet. The air was more heavy with the smell of the cud than most other days. There was always a pot brewing in the village, but Kyer could never taste it in the smoke before. Amita, too, was naked as she stood over the pot. Her usual red sash was gone, and her dark hair

flowed over her back as she churned the stew. When Kyer reached her, he stopped, trying to decipher the expression on her face. It seemed oddly somber and expectant in a rhetorical way. Amita did not hold the gaze long, but long enough for it to emboss itself on the back of his skull.

Releasing Kyer from her stare, Amita sounded the drum a second time. The drum, which occupied the exact center of the village, was only about seven hands high and as many in diameter, but a much larger sound came from it when its almost translucent head was struck. This second blast of the drum awakened the community. All of the Elders emerged naked from their huts and made their way to several smaller fires which filled the space between every other hut in the village's circular design. Over every fire was a pot of cud, and over every pot were the expectantly gawking faces of a group of Elders. They all looked inward at Kyer who stood transfixed next to Amita.

Amita motioned to Kyer to scoop out a portion of cud and eat it. He had seen the Elders eat the cud before, and he knew the strange way they acted afterwards. Kyer noticed that the cud had been boiled to a thicker paste than the usual gelatinous mud texture which had always made him think that he would gag on it. He reluctantly pressed his hand into the concoction, pulling out a surprisingly cool and dry clump. It smelled putrid, and, when he finally put it in his mouth, proved to taste even worse. Chewing it seemed only to wrench tears from his eyes, so he swallowed it whole. The Elders returned the gesture, shoving handfuls into their faces. When the Elders finished, they resumed the expectant gaze. Kyer looked to Amita, trying to understand what his next move should be. He had no interest in sampling another handful, but Amita's expression left little doubt that this was to be his path. Kyer scooped out another portion and ate it. The Elders mocked his actions. This process was repeated until the fifth portion sent Kyer's stomach turning. He could no longer taste the cud's flavor, but he could feel it reentering his mouth. Kyer

struggled in vain to contain it in his throat, but couldn't. He was reassured when several of the Elders couldn't keep from spilling their bellies. Amita then put a large amount of the cud into a sack, and led Kyer east out of the village to the jungle beyond.

A short distance outside the village, Kyer's head began to swim. He started to lose focus and had trouble discerning the outline of objects. One thing would blur into the next, and everything lacked closure. Kyer's body teemed in waves. He could feel each hair on his body individually blowing in the mid-morning breeze. The plants began to sway and dance, animated in the light which poked through the canopy above. Bushes were shifting in an attempt to gain position over the tangles of constricting ground cover. Little yellow flowers faded to blue, scentless on a spring day. Kyer noticed a willow that cared enough to form a face. Its mouth gaped open deep and black, and spoke in the form of a family of birds leaving their nest.

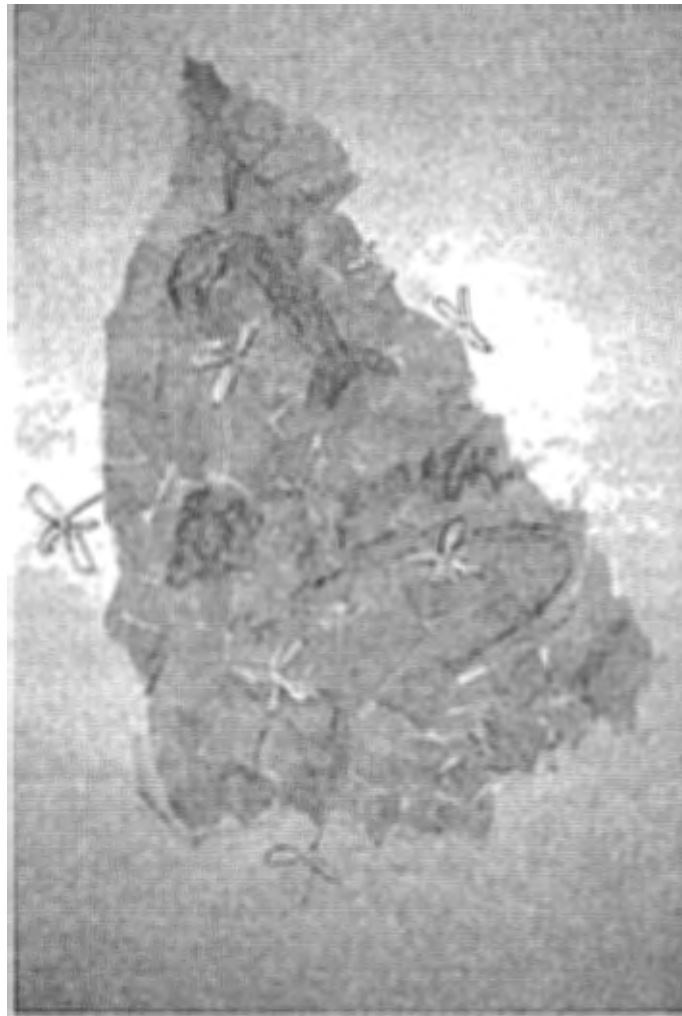
The wild-eyed procession trudged along and around a bend in the trail where the jungle became significantly thicker. Kyer began to sense his true size as the monuments of nature closed in around him. The dancing plants seemed to be competing for restricted space, extinguishing one another with empirical tactics. In the shadows of a rotting tree, Kyer saw the leopard that killed his brother. It stalked along side of him occasionally turning knowing glances at prey and companions. Kyer could feel the heat of its stomach and almost see the blood pump through the tiny veins in its eyes. Amita stopped, as did the rest of the procession, for another portion of cud. When Kyer turned back from the sack, the leopard had disappeared without any indication of when it would be returning.

Upon reaching a small clearing among some flowering bushes, Amita stopped. In the center of the clearing stood three large agate stones of deep red and grey. Everyone took another offering of cud while they rested before the stones. The colors swam in tidal currents just under the

surface of the markers. Kyer's eyes were watering profusely, as were those of the whole procession, after the last helping of cud. Four Elders, including Amita, then shoved the middle stone on its side. It fell silent, and Kyer realized that he could no longer hear, smell, or taste the jungle around him. He looked at Amita who summoned him to her side. They stood at the opening of their ancestors' grave. Kyer leaped down into a crudely vaulted passage lined with the decaying remains of his forefathers. Amita joined him with a torch, the glow from which returned to the more recent additions their lively qualities. Kyer crept over to where Taeger was leaning against a tree stump. The bodies were arranged in chronological order, so that the most recent corpse was held in place by the stump. Taeger's half-eaten face gathered itself, and was able to muster expressions. The mouth took on a more ambivalent bend, and the eyes seemed to slumber in profundity. It seemed to ease Kyer seeing Taeger there with the rest of the ancestors. The questions he had clung to before had vanished, leaving no desire to have them answered.

There was a bowl of white paint on the tree stump. Amita dipped her hand into the paint, and placed her forearm on the stump's surface. Two Elders then spun Kyer against Amita's hand. The ring rode around Kyer's breastbone; he was a bit taller than Soan Kama. The corpses became older and more decayed as the procession shuffled down the burial place of their ancestors. Kyer longed for the sun, which he hoped was still shining in the sky above them. The tunnel ended deep underground in a domed chamber. There were no decaying remains of friends long lost, just a large, round dais in the center of the space. It was fashioned out of the bedrock as a continuation of the floor. The tear-streamed parade wrapped around its perimeter. Their feet seemed to adhere to the room's continual surface. In the torchlight, Kyer could see the ring of white encircle the dais, each body providing its part of the whole. Amita extinguished the torch, leaving them all in the virtual

dark. The ceiling funneled up into a shaft that was dimly lit from the top. Kyer could just discern Amita raise a club above her head, as they waited in silence. Slowly the shaft began to illuminate as the sun would after an eclipse. Amita struck the dais as the room filled with an amber glow. Kyer felt a tremendous rumbling send shock waves through his body. The whole ring of Elders vibrated naked, their feet firmly rooted to the stone floor below. The reverberations continued long after the illuminating eclipse faded. Amita hoisted Kyer up on the dais, which still shook under his feet, and motioned for him to climb up into the shaft. He found the series of footholds and ascended. At the top, there was a lid with handles. Kyer pushed, and the lid gave way. He climbed out of the hole, noticing that he had been in the body of the communal drum. Kyer stood there in the center of the circle of meager huts, and discovered his lack of perspective. Amita emerged and gave Kyer an understanding look. The rest of the Elders did the same, and they all returned to their homes.



BEE HIVE

MIXED MEDIA ON PAPER

## Dance the Waltz

My throat constricts in sandpaper textures.  
My chameleon gown swirls like an umbrella around me as  
I do the required steps.  
One-Two-Three,  
One-Two-Three.

I slide onto the smooth wax of the floor  
And watch my shadow dance.  
Turning, my form is obscured  
By something larger and more significant.  
My partner's grip tightens.  
I choke on elusive tears.  
My dancing partner has become dangerous.  
I struggle to keep the steps.  
One-Two-Three!  
One-Two-Three!

Turning, I change partners.  
This one's face is lines from a trite poem.  
The white rows gleaming from behind his mouth smile but  
His eyes stay uninvolved.  
He is the embodiment of conformity.  
He is straight lines of dominoes waiting to be toppled.  
I do the steps to perfection.  
One-Two-Three.  
One-Two-Three.

Again I change partners.  
I am encased in his cape of risk.  
But after my one-two-three repression  
I welcome his danger.  
We topple the dominoes and start a  
Jitterbug.

## He Wraps Himself With the Night

Lost in the legion, he slowly lumbers.  
 He sits and smiles at the ones who pass.  
 Cold on the street, he is left to slumber.  
 His haven is fleeting and open to harass.  
 The people who pass search to take in such  
     surroundings.  
 His musty and worn sweater falls off his figure.  
 They turn away when he speaks, although he listens to  
     people's hounding.  
 Opening his palm, they walk past, fast with vigor.  
 He gathers his cluster of belongings on the cement  
     where he sleeps.  
 Embracing his body he wraps himself with the night.  
 He is swallowed in the city where the edge is very  
     steep.  
 Weary with the outlook, he hangs on to the hope that  
     others will see the light.  
 The world used to be his, today he belongs to the  
     numbers.  
 Now lost in the legion, he slowly lumbers.

## Reunion

SHERYL  
 was my best friend in high school.  
 Great track runner,  
 a high potential blazing beauty on the field,  
 a moody mongrel in the home.  
 Abortion several times over.  
 Her mother was abusive,  
 a walking talking bulldozer of esteem destruction;  
 Sheryl has become an abusive mother.  
 Has no job, no husband;  
 she told me the government was her man.  
 Sheryl has three children with one on the way.  
 Dropped out of college, dropped out of life.  
 Looks for the approval of some man.  
 None of her children have the same father.  
 Has a bright mind, idea ridden and intellectually curious,  
 but she will not use it.  
 She fought a girl named Kenya last month  
 who is five years younger than her.  
 Sheryl beat her down,  
 beat her until she became an integral part of the pavement,  
 and Sheryl became an integral part of her blood.  
 They are both pregnant by the same boy.  
 Kenya is five months, Sheryl is six months.  
 Twenty-three years old going on fifty-three.  
 Going down, down, down...  
 She sees me on the street  
 and asks me if I think I'm better than she is.  
 "No, I don't," I reply, "We both have debts  
 that need to be brought out of collections." Silence.



## Inherent Rights or Duties

The right to protect the lives of ourselves and our family has, in most cases, been seen as inherent. Images of killers and other assailants enter our minds usually sparking fear—and the urge to defend. But what of the other, more ambiguous cases? What of the cases in which an ordinary person is mistaken for a burglar, or when someone is shot for nothing more than trespassing? Can the average human be a proper judge? These questions create a realm of argument which must be dealt with through law. My main goal is to explore information that will either justify or prove wrong the use of deadly force as a response to physical abuse.

Imagine the scenario, a woman is attacked in an alley by a man wanting her purse. They struggle. The woman recovers a gun from her purse, decides to use it, and kills her assailant. Is she right in doing so? The law says yes. This case would be dealt with as self-defense. The law justifies this using the philosophy that the woman could not have predicted the assailant's next move. For all she knew, he was concealing a knife and just about to strike. If she believes that her life is in danger then by law she is justified. But there are problems with this assumption. There are instances on the other hand in which the person judges incorrectly. Imagine that a paranoid man carries a gun or other weapon with him at all times. One day when he is walking down the street, he sees another man approach him. The man isn't dressed well and looks suspicious. When the suspicious-looking man approaches the paranoid individual, the paranoid pulls his weapon and kills his perceived assailant. In reality, however, the perceived assailant was only a beggar asking for spare change.

Our society is almost in a constant state of paranoia. It allows its citizens to arm themselves and to decide the fates of others. Is this logical? Indira Gandhi describes this action as the monkey who, while trying to squash the fly, injured its

own face. She states that these actions solve no problem but, as she explains through her analogy, they backfire instead (Panigrahi 72). As further regards backfire, I think that it is safe to assume that once someone did kill another individual under false contentions, a strong feeling of guilt would overwhelm the perpetrator. Instead of this action protecting their life, they have actually made a harmless situation into a life-altering experience, as Gandhi relates.

Aristotle poses similar views in his book entitled, *Nicomachean Ethics*. He states that basic retaliation between two individuals is wrong. He sees the better action, in a case of physical abuse or attack, as discipline enacted by society. This discipline is to be implicated upon the guilty party by a magistrate in a proportionate manner. In this way it is not only just, but necessary to maintain order and hold society together (Aristotle 159). This view solves the problem of an improper judge. Instead of the person on the street judging a situation in the heat of passion, the judge is someone who can base a decision on the facts in a cooler, and more rational manner. The professional judge also has been appointed by society and is therefore determined to be qualified to make such a decision. Ideally, in a society that could convict the guilty and punish them right away, I believe that this would work. All those who were guilty would be punished for their crime, and the number of innocent deaths could possibly decrease. But what of a society whose policies are overrun, and its court system clogged? What if society fails in its duties, as in Connecticut?

In Connecticut the citizens are said to be so overrun by crime, that they have tried everything from increased police involvement to organized neighborhood watch programs (McCarthy 1). It seems that they had tried the positive approach and hadn't received positive results. They decided to hire a group known as the Guardian Angels. This organization patrols the streets and brings order through retaliation (1). Are they wrong? The people of Connecticut

rejected using violence and tried to rely on society to do its job, but when it didn't, they felt an obligation to keep their homes safe.

The views of Aristotle and Gandhi have merit, but what happens when society fails in its responsibility to maintain order by punishing the guilty? James Brady, an independent researcher for the *New York Times*, described the environment that children face in New York schools as a war zone (Brady 15). Could we, as parents, take no action toward the safety of our children? Must we always have faith in a society that sometimes seems to fail in its job? Citizens of Connecticut would say no.

The situations in Connecticut and New York seem almost hopeless, and to still rely solely on a failing society sounds illogical. In my opinion, however, these neighborhoods who choose to requite crime themselves are wrong. Society is a precious ideal that must be protected. It is true that it can exhibit bad qualities and fail to do its duty, but our role, as citizens, is not to take action in a retaliatory way but to fulfill our obligation by changing legislation. As Gandhi states, retaliation will do more harm than good. What we need to do is to influence law through voting or taking other action that will shape our system into one that will produce a safe environment. I will admit, some innocent lives would be lost in this effort, but in the long run, the results would be a nation of peace and order. It is by peaceful revolution of law, like the passive resistance efforts of Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi, that things are changed for the better, not by individual violence. The use of deadly force as a response to physical abuse, or perceived possibility of physical abuse, is not just. As difficult as it often is to rely upon society for our needs, to slowly create a peaceful environment through legislation is the only solution.

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JENNIFER HATFIELD

## Greetings

As Bobby gets ready for school,  
He stops in the hallway  
To pet the dog.  
And as he walks away,  
A single maggot  
Pauses in its meal  
To wave back.