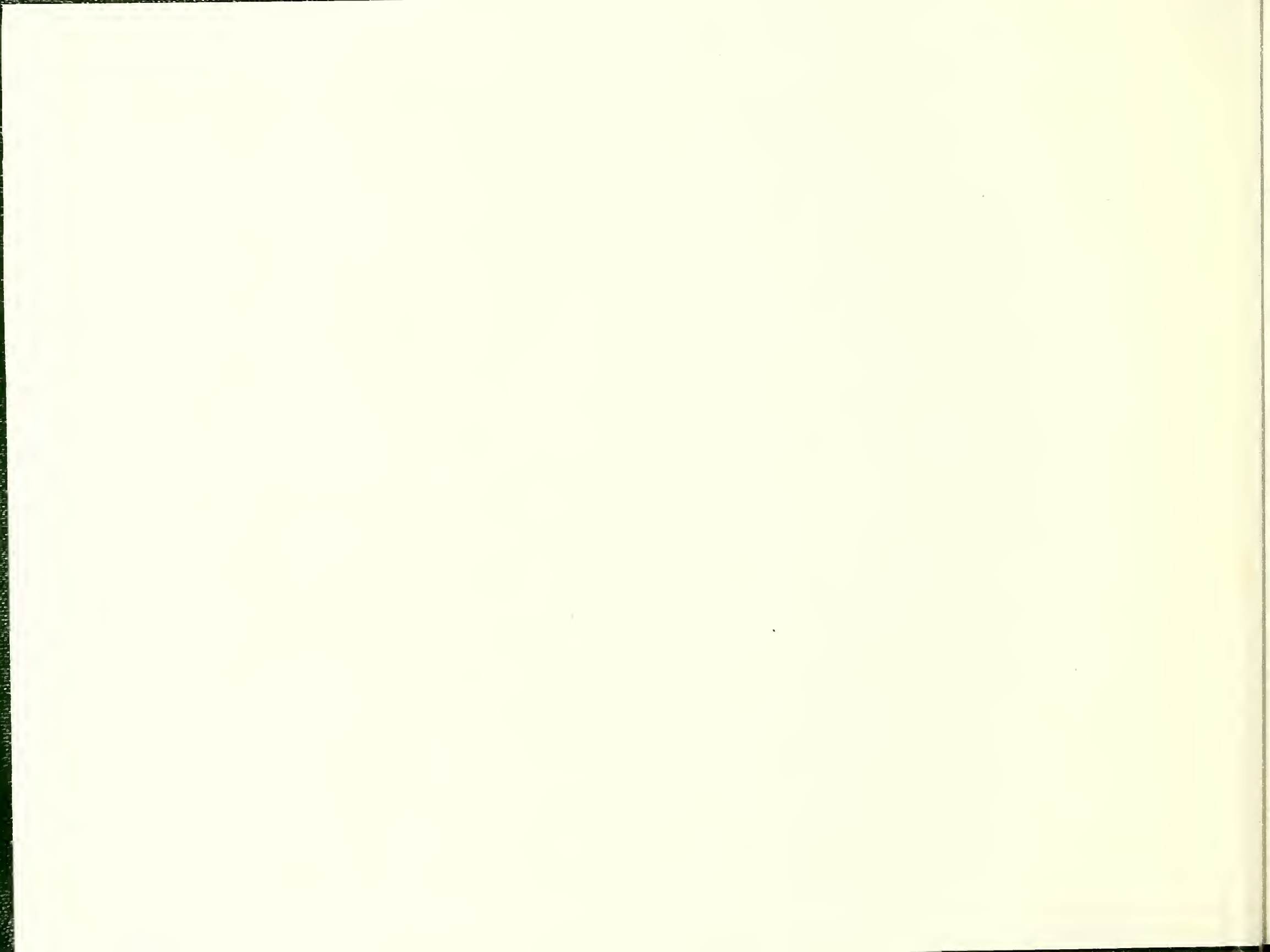



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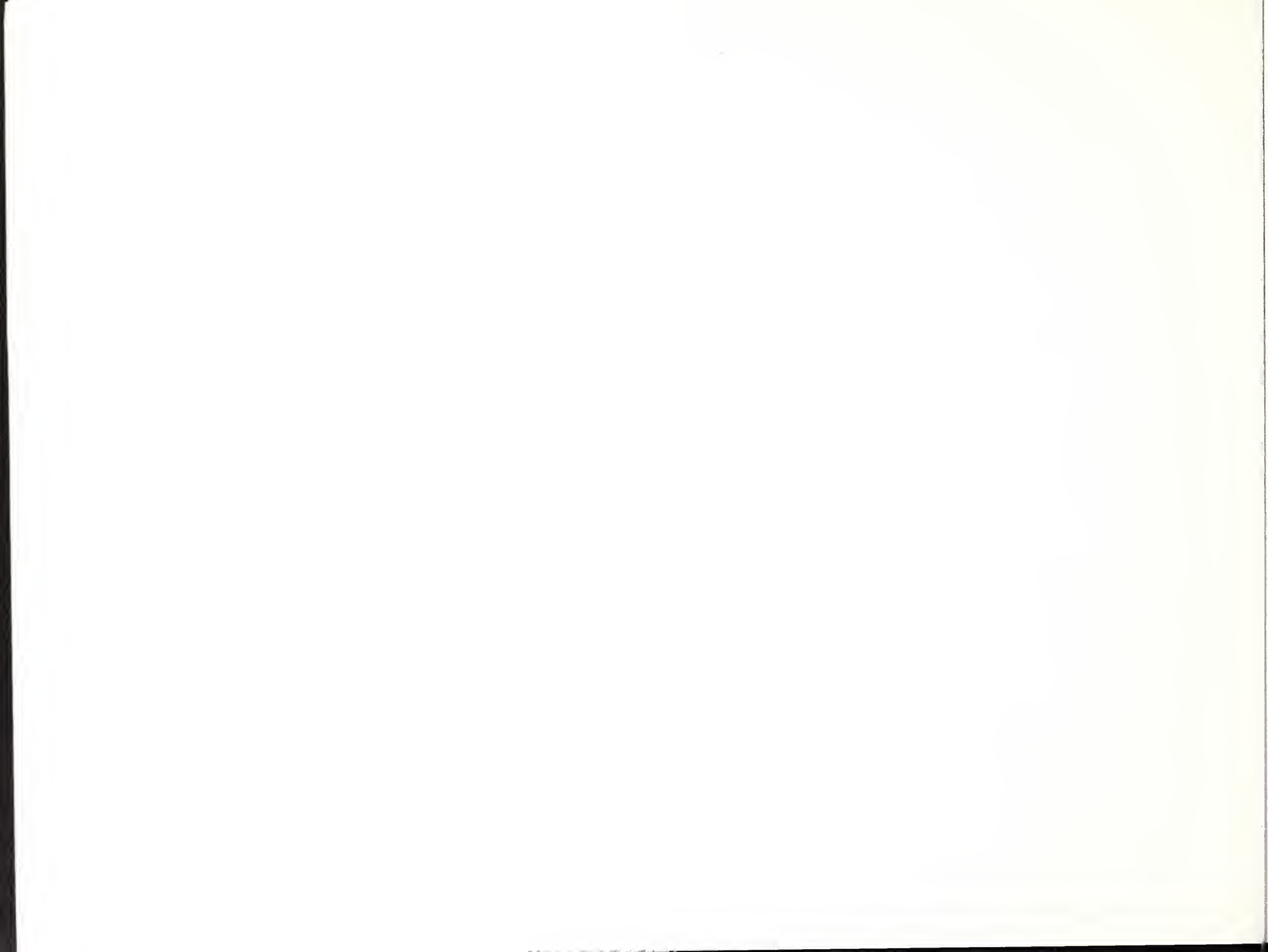
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P'AN KU



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# Editorial

"The time has come," the Walrus said, "to talk of many things..." The time has also come for me to step down from my post as editor so that another may guide the destiny of *P'an Ku*. During the past two years, I have had the opportunity to meet and work with many wonderful people as well as watch *P'an Ku* evolve from a somewhat esoteric magazine into a highly visible and respected publication. In addition, this humble little magazine has received numerous awards from the Florida Community College Press Association, a second place position in the country as determined by the Community College Humanities Association, as well as serving as the model for several school publications in this region as well as in other parts of the state. This achievement was by no means accomplished overnight. It took great dedication as well as long hours of work not only from myself but from my advisor, Patrick Ellingham, and the select few who decided to put forth the effort by becoming part of the *P'an Ku* staffs (then actually stayed when they found out there was real work involved). In addition to the work involved in creating a magazine, we have also had to deal with our detractors whose slings and arrows sought to undermine and discredit this publication. Well, we are still here despite the efforts of these poor misguided fools.

There are those out there reading this editorial who are waiting for me to go off on some sarcastic, cynical tirade concerning education, politics, the general population, or any number of other topics which strike me at any given moment. I'm sorry to have to disappoint all of my loyal fans, but I have been rather benevolent as of late. Instead, I would like to thank Patrick Ellingham for all of his support and encouragement during my time with *P'an Ku*. His dedication to students as well as to the promotion of the arts is rarely found in this day and age. All student organizations should have an advisor of this caliber.

Well, I guess I have ranted on for long enough (besides, only so much text can be squeezed into a four inch column). I have enjoyed working on *P'an Ku* and will miss it very much, but we all have to move on to greater adventures. I have left a great legacy for the next editor who I hope will be as committed as I am to promoting the work of students of literature and the arts. It will be hard to find someone with the ability to uphold the level of excellence established by *P'an Ku*, but I have faith that there is someone out there who is ready to embark on this incredible (and, on occasion, dangerous) journey.

Farewell and enjoy.

Mark Jetté  
Editor

(Do I get my Oscar now? What! I was robbed!!!)



"Structural Integrity" Pencil Drawing by Mark Jetté

## Lemonade And Ginger Snaps

She liked me. Didn't like many kids,  
but she liked ME...she said so.  
Enough to ply me with lemonade and ginger snaps  
every day, for two whole weeks,  
that Summer of the Inquisition.

Aunt Sis was her name-my grandmother's sister.  
"Stingy and mean," my cousins said.  
"Squeezes nickels till the buffaloes scream!"  
they told me. But I didn't care.....  
she liked me.

I felt so "grown up" sitting on her front porch-  
for all the world to see-just me and Aunt Sis,  
sipping our lemonade from tall skinny glasses  
and nibbling our snaps in a "Ladylike Fashion,"  
(pinkies in the air) in front of God and everybody!

She wanted to know all about my life in the big city.  
Did I go to church?  
What my Mama cooked for our Sunday dinners.  
How come my Daddy never joined us on vacations?...  
an' other stuff. She seemed so kind and smiled a lot.

Sometimes she'd wrap my curls around her crooked fingers,  
or pat my head like I was a Pekingese, or something,  
while I prattled away, divulging family secrets with  
a seven-year old's candor..  
A BARGAIN AT TWICE THE PRICE!

*-Lois Schiman*

## The Tobacconist

He loves her like one would eat  
of a peach, relishing  
its exterior but forsaking  
the pulp- the core  
of its delectability-

like

how the wind sometimes blows  
harsh yet tainted,  
stealing only the edges off a cigarette's ash,  
as if a wounded air.

His words align with jackknife slang,  
carve her insides hollow.

*-Rob Riggs*

## Refugee

welcome

sister, brother  
layman, laywoman and a like

dip your toes  
in  
take  
a  
dive  
these waves are float-free  
by the way  
we're fresh out of life-jackets  
but if you wait in line  
we'll find your size and color-

does your foreign tongue like licking  
sweet pungent vowels  
controlled consonants  
just free your verse-

well,  
doesn't miami taste guava sweet

*-Pamela G. Greenside*



*Ink Drawing by Troy Sumner*

# And When We Laugh

by

Vivian Valvezan

It was cold out and a blanket of sorrow was falling around Lucy's shoulder like an unforgiving hug, a suffocating yoke. She could not shrug it off, no matter how she tried. She watched as I walked in from the outside, half frozen, dusting off the snow from my jacket, worn and faded from the previous winters spent in these parts. She laughed softly. She laughed softly at me.

Years ago, in this same place, she was lounging in the wicker chair by a frosted window while she told me stories of life in Paris as a naive American: the male dancers in pale blue stockings and scarves, the scarlet whorehouses where women hung out of windowsills like loose pieces of drapery, opium dens, dark brown and warm like her small wooden house. She raised her cup and I asked her, "What are you drinking?" She did not answer. She laughed softly at me.

And as before, I sit on my knees near her chair, watching her splendidly carved features shake with the unknown melody in the air, seeping into the room from a door left open down the hall.

"You make me laugh." She told me, and stroked my outstretched palm. Her smile left a ripple effect on her face like that of a stone thrown into a still lake.

"Lucy. Why don't you tell me?"

"Shh. The snow is falling. Listen." She closed her eyes and blindly felt for my face, brushing my lashes, forcing me to close my lids. In the silence I could hear her breathing, slow and rhythmic, a battle for her body though she will not admit it to be the truth. I stayed still for a long time, willing the darkness to end, that she would lift the veil she left with her hand. I knew this would probably be the last winter we would spend together, so I increased my patience, though my heart stirred like that of a small child.

"Open your eyes." I let the room fill my mind once again. The window was frosted, each minute snow whitened the glass even more. Lucy was leaning back in her chair, the handmade afghan enveloping her small, delicate frame. She had her arm across her lap, the blue fringes from the edges of the afghan ominously looking like bright veins upon her ghostly white and translucent skin. It shocked me for a moment and then I let it pass. Her grey hair laid upon her shoulder in a thick wiry braid, and she touched it regularly, seemingly to check of its very existence, to make sure her hair, and possibly even she, were not a vivid dream. She noticed that I was watching her, and her eyes wandered around the room, searching the darkened corners. I sought for her eyes, and when I found her gaze, she locked into mine strongly. She closed her eyes and labored a breath, and held my hand strongly as she coughed. She shook violently.

"Let me get you some water." I walked out of the room quickly and into the kitchen, still hearing Lucy coughing. The pipes groaned and shrieked while the cold water eased from the tap. I filled the cup half way when her coughing stopped abruptly. I ran to the living room. "Lucy?" From behind, the wicker chair looked warm and cozy. I walked towards the front, Lucy's head was cocked to the side. She did not blink. The glass fell from my hand to the floor. It did not make a sound.

The snow flowed lightly from the sky onto the barren tree silently. It towered over Lucy's grave like a monument. The priest looked like a small black dot walking across the vast empty field and disappeared behind a wall of whiteness. I followed him back to the house. I looked back towards Lucy. The snow now covered the entire field, obscuring all but the large empty tree.

I did not go back to the house until spring, afraid of doing Lucy's packing and of facing the magnitude of my loss. I unlocked the front door and entered the darkness. I turned on the lights to find everything has been left exactly as it was five months ago. The room was warm and musty and the broken glass laid near the wicker chair. I wiped my face and went into the kitchen. The broom was behind the cellar door. I brushed the glass into a pile. I stared at the chair. The blue afghan was strewn across the top of the arm. I took it to the bedroom, where I began to pack the remains of her life. She had very little left. I reached for the jewelry box when the phone rang.

"Evelyn. Are you all right? You were to call when you arrived." John's voice was soft and sincere.

"Fine. Just packing her things."

"Take your time. I know this is hard for you. Do you want me to come up?"

"No." He returned nothing but silence for my answer. He understood.

"Be careful." He finally said. I hung up. I went back to the bedroom. The suitcase laid open upon the bed. I pushed it aside and fell asleep.

The morning came too soon, the sunlight streaming through the blinds that were half closed. From the living room there was a shuffling noise. I walked slowly towards the room and paused at the doorway. The wicker chair looked occupied. I eased towards the door, where I could get a clear look at the chair. There, wrapped in the blue afghan, was Lucy.

"Lucy?" The name choked out of me. She motioned for me to come closer.

"There is something I forgot to tell you..." She grabbed my hand. Her eyes were dancing in the morning light. She was real. I fell to my knees, crying.

"What?" I asked, through sobs.

"What I was drinking." I looked up at her. She was smiling. She reached out and closed my eyes. Everything went black.

"Evelyn?" I opened my eyes. Lucy's face was close to mine. I drew back, frightened. "You fainted, child. Sit up." I obeyed, and sat on my knees next to her chair.

"But you're..."

"Shhh. None of that nonsense." She interrupted. "Go make some tea for me and I'll tell you that story I promised." I got up slowly and watched oddly as she nodded her smiling face. Although this was how we began all of her stories, I walked to the kitchen in a daze. I could hear her humming. I took the silver box she kept her orange flavored tea in. Ornate and very old, the silver box was heavy and beautifully decorated with carvings of small trees bearing fruit. A kettle was already on the stove. The water was hot. I made a cup and brought it out to Lucy. She gingerly lifted the cup and saucer out of my hand. I took a seat back onto the wooden floor.

"When I first went to Paris in 1936, I was just about twenty. My brother picked me up in his Dodge. I remember it was yellow and simply beautiful. We drove about an hour to get to New York City. It was so beautiful back then- and clean. He walked me to the dock and saw me aboard. After all, I was this young child traveling alone to Paris. My mother thought it was scandalous, but she knew I would be trained by the best there. And I was. I once danced with Najinski."

"How was the boat you took?"

"I don't remember. There were a lot of beautiful people there in expensive clothes. I remember that. When we arrived to France, it seemed like we were at sea for an eternity and the events that I would see there far surpassed what I saw on the ship. I went to stay at a small hotel with the other dancers I was to train with. It was small and dingy and I went to the cafe below quite often by myself. The cafe was lousy and the coffee was strong, but here I sat for the year I was in Paris, watching the city pass by my feet. I never spoke to anyone or made eye contact until this man began sitting at a small table across from me. He was older than me, yet he had a handsome youthful appearance. He was a striking man. I stared at him

openly and he returned my impoliteness with a stare of his own. This went on for over one week. One morning upon my arrival at the cafe, I noticed he was not at his usual table but at mine. I walked quickly and sat down across from him. I did not look him in the eye. We sat in silence and the waiter brought us our respective morning drinks: I had coffee, and he had tea. It had such an intensive aroma that I thought it was his cologne. With what he was drinking so much on my mind, we finally had our first words.

"What are you drinking?" I asked.

"When you look at me I will answer." I looked up. His starched white linen shirt was opened slightly at the collar. He was smiling at me. I looked him fully in the face, fuming at this game. He sensed it, and laughed. He looked back down onto his newspaper and did not answer the question.

"Are you not going to tell me?"

"Why? To quell your desire? Then you will know my secret. Then we will never meet again." He said this with such seriousness that it took me by surprise and embarrassed me. When he was finished with his paper he left enough money on the table for both of us and began to leave.

"Monsieur, you left too much money here!" I cried. He did not turn around but walked down the street and into the crowd. I picked up his tea cup. The faint aroma was indeed from his tea. I signaled the waiter. "Monsieur, what was this gentleman drinking?"

"Mademoiselle, I do not know."

"How could you possibly not know?" I asked. He did not answer. He cleaned up the table and went back inside. Every day Monsieur and I sat together and everyday I asked him what he was drinking. He never said a word but he laughed. He laughed softly at me. I asked the cafe waiters, all of them. None knew what he drank. I was furious at this game. Then one evening I was walking back to the hotel from dancing when he approached me from out of the darkness.

"Mademoiselle." I turned around to find him walking behind me. We walked together for a great while when he

spoke again. "I am ready to tell you what I have been drinking." We stopped beneath a streetlight. "Only if you will receive my gift." He took out of his pocket a necklace. It was delicate and absolutely lovely with a pearl pendant, hanging alone. Without a word he lifted my hair and fastened the chain. His hands lingered around my neck and he whispered his answer in my ear and kissed me. He walked me to the hotel and disappeared into the street. Then and now I wished I never pursued his answer because he was true to his word. I never met him again and my days left in Paris were lost to my thoughts of him and his enigma. And although it sounds strange, it was my greatest love."

She looked down at me and smiled. Her story was over.

"So what were you drinking?" I asked. She laughed softly. She reached into her pocket. In her delicate hand laid the necklace with the pearl pendant. She placed it into my palm. She leaned towards me and whispered. "Mandarin Orange tea." She brushed her lips against my cheek and closed my eyes.

When I woke up, I was lying on the floor near the chair. The sunlight was entering full force through the window. I sat up and looked at the chair. The afghan was gone. I stood and looked around the room. Everything looked the same, yet something was different. "Lucy?" I called out. No one answered. I knew it was all a dream. I walked to the bedroom and began packing her things again. I reached for the jewelry box. I paused as I held the small metal box in my hand. I opened it and inside, all alone, was the necklace with the pearl pendant. I fastened it on and walked out to the living room. She was definitely gone. I opened the front door. The sunlight blinded me as I stepped outside. Far in the distance, I could see the tree over Lucy's grave was in full bloom. "Mandarin Oranges," I said out loud. I began to laugh softly. I laughed softly to myself.



*B&W Photograph by Lynn Houston*

## Move in Darkness

I run through the night, cold and hungry.....,  
my internal fire burns hard, it makes my emotions explode  
into colors not named by man. Feet move in and out of puddles  
fast, wet feet, dry eyes, now eye lids close quick.....

They shall replenish a fluid which keeps me clear headed.  
But I must still move swift, faster than the eyes that follow us  
in the night. White hot....., their stare kills in a heart beat.  
"I've seen it".

Run to the east, run for the first signs of spring, run for  
the sun. "He's afraid of the sun". So I'll go to the house of  
the birth of my father, it's burned down, they didn't understand.  
Ignorance has destroyed me,... in the ashes of hate. But I  
cannot stay still, I must move on. So.

I run through the night, cold and hungry.....

"The ☺  
Cause"

## Ode to Jim

Visions of moon beams are seen all night long as the incense  
of the pot party clears the air and makes the air a carrier of  
pleasure, and as I sit back in my bed made of soft detergent  
fragranced quilt and the wet - dry sensation of the surf side sea level  
beach sand, I can only remember the visions experienced on my  
high tonight.

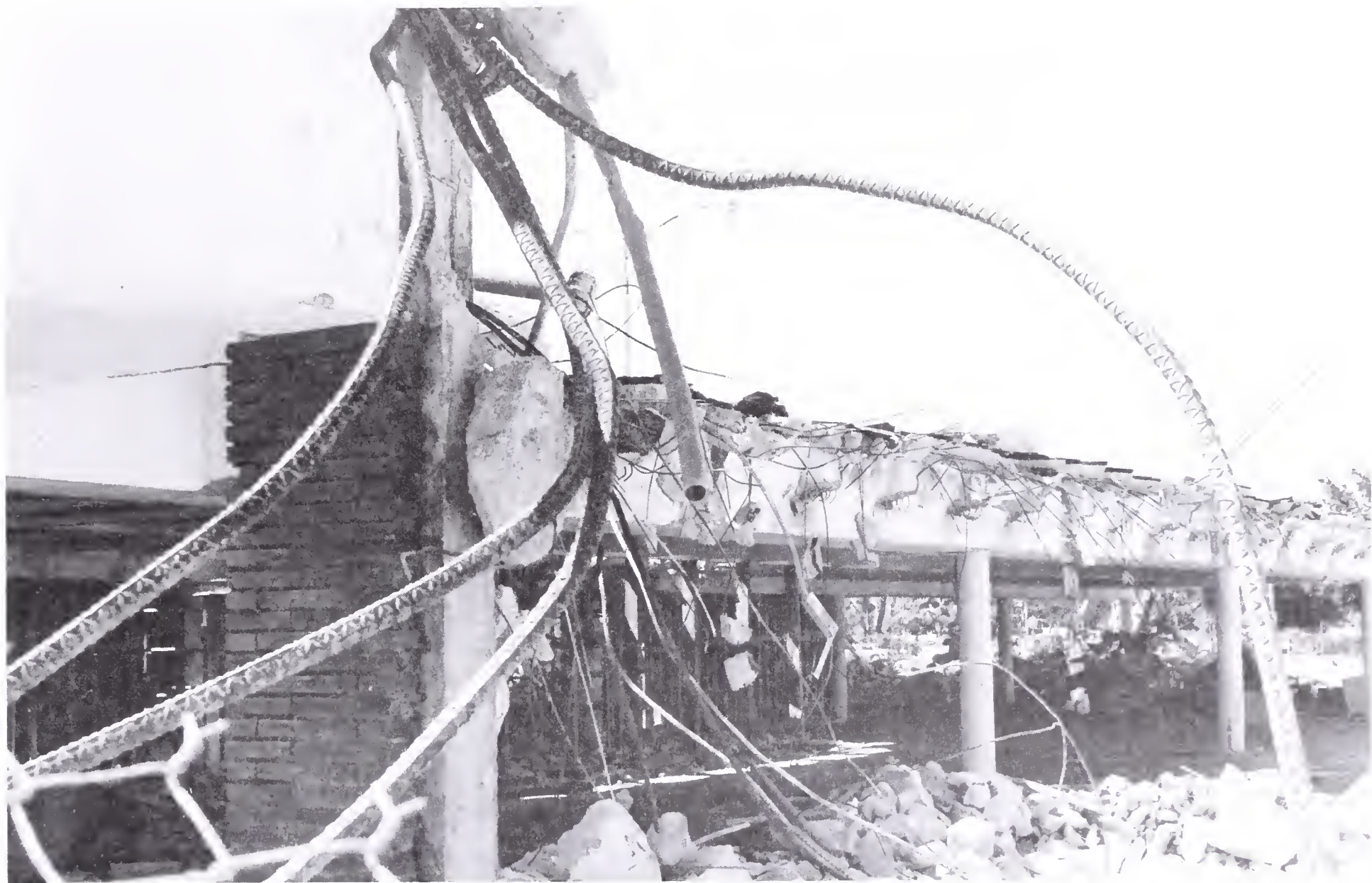
I saw the colors of the rainbow fly in perfect  
synchronization. But as suddenly as they had appeared, they were  
separated. The blue became birds, the green became trees, and  
the red became rain.... the kind that never lasts. The yellow  
became children as orange formed a rose. Lavender became  
a labyrinth because those two words just kind of rime. The browns  
and tans became part of the sky and the color of white formed the  
moonlit night.

These changes filled me with pleasure never felt before  
Will these feelings ever go away,  
Shall the colors ever fade,  
Could my mind ever stray.....  
Yes!

And yet for all these colors, one did not change. Black  
remained the same. Tall and monolithic, never chipping, never  
scratching, perfect in every mathematic, geographic, and artistic  
detail. Cold and somber it stands alone, never changes, never  
varies. It's only response. "Something had to remain the same."

"The ☺  
Cause"





*B&W Photograph by Chris DeRosa*

# Wonderful Dreams Live In My Small Bedroom

by  
Miriam Marin

In my room, old, dark, inanimate furniture rests on the deep brown carpet, and the white walls are decorated with intangible movements. Through the window to my right, the moon light inhabits my reflecting area, and the shadows come alive. I am the only one who can see them, who talks to them, who lives with them, and who understands what they really are. Intimate shadows are projected on the walls when the moon arrives; then tones invade the black and white.

Friendly shadows hide behind the armoire every time I turn on my night table lamp, running, afraid of light because it means that they will die. But, because I love them I bring them back, to tell me about their day and mine.

They are my drifting nocturnal partners who take my hands and accompany me to the view of my daily acts. Sometimes we laugh; sometimes we cry. At my left, there is a corridor where they sit and sleep once in a while.

I am not able to live without my elusive friends; on those nights when the moon is not nearby, I jump out of my window to look for them all over the park. I check underneath the stones and I ask the Oaks, but they are selfish; they won't tell me even if they know where my friends are. Then I run. I sit facing the lake and we start to talk. While I am looking at the stars, I ask it again for the shadows of my life.

I look at my window, now from far away. I feel their absence and I start wondering again. I see them playing, trying to hide from me again, knowing that it will bring me enormous pain. Later, multicolored butterflies lift me and take me back into my bed.

Finally, after finding them, we start to talk about the emotions of the day and memories of the past. But the jealous dawn in its revenge brings the morning light, taking away the reflecting shadows of my life.



*"Flower of Life" Graphite Drawing by Man Lai Cheng*

# The Blue Shorts

a play by

Patty M. Smith

## SCENE ONE

(ROBIN'S office in RANDY and ROBIN'S house. There is a desk, chair, file cabinet and computer equipment. ROBIN, a woman in her late twenties with shoulder length blonde hair, is sitting at the desk. She is a high tech computer program designer. Casually dressed, she is wearing glasses and her hair is pulled back in a ponytail. On her desk is a picture of her and RANDY. Enter RANDY, ROBIN'S brother. Although they are twins, they do not bear a strong family resemblance. RANDY has brown hair, blue eyes, beard and mustache. RANDY is a homosexual and is battling the early stages AIDS. Two days earlier, he was released from the hospital two days ago after being hospitalized for twenty nine days. RANDY is wearing pajamas and a bathrobe.)

RANDY

(Walks around room) They really did a nice job building this addition on to the house!

ROBIN

(Staring at computer monitor) What, Randy?

RANDY

They really did a nice job on this room!

ROBIN

(Does not take eyes off monitor) Yes, they did.

RANDY

I think I like this room better than mine! Let's switch!

ROBIN

(Does not look at RANDY) You want to switch rooms.

RANDY

No . . . I'm just kidding! Have you seen my blue shorts?

ROBIN

(Responds while typing, looks at keyboard) Aren't they in your dresser?

RANDY

No! I would have found them if they were!

ROBIN

(Still does not look at RANDY) Then they must still be in your clothes hamper!

RANDY

(Stares at ROBIN) Still in my clothes hamper! Robin, I was in the hospital for almost a month! You mean you haven't done my wash yet?

ROBIN

(Finally looks at RANDY, apologetic) I'm sorry, Randy. I guess I forgot about the clothes in the hamper.

RANDY

But I thought I specifically asked you to wash those shorts!

ROBIN

You did, Randy; I forgot. I'll wash them later. I've had a lot on my mind. ( Starts typing on the keyboard)

RANDY (Impatiently) When?

ROBIN

When I'm finished. I have a deadline to meet, and this is due

tomorrow. Just a little longer, and I'll be done.

RANDY

*(Slight sarcasm, walks to the desk)* Well, Robin, how long is a little longer? I want to wear those shorts today!

ROBIN

I don't know, Randy! Right now, I have a lot of work to do. Can't you wear something else?

RANDY

*(Slightly angry)* I don't want to wear something else! You had plenty of time to take care of this; it's not like I asked you to dry clean my entire wardrobe!

ROBIN

*(Calmly)* Randy, please. I have a deadline and I have to meet it! I can't tell my boss that I didn't finish the program because I had to do my brother's wash. They are only letting me work at home on a trial basis. If I can't give them the results they want then I'll have to spend more time at the office!

RANDY

*(Sarcastically)* So . . . you can't take five minutes to do something you should have done already!

ROBIN

No, not right now. I have to finish this!

RANDY

Okay . . . fine! But why didn't you wash them with the stuff you brought home from the hospital? Or with your clothes? You have been washing your clothes, haven't you?

ROBIN

*(Sarcastically)* No, Randy, the maid takes care of that! I just forgot to tell her about your shorts!

RANDY

You don't have to be sarcastic!

ROBIN

You don't have to ask stupid questions!

RANDY

Well, Robin, I wouldn't have to ask stupid questions if you had...

ROBIN

*(Calm, but annoyed)* Randy, don't say it! I have been with you everyday since you were admitted to the hospital. And when I wasn't at the hospital, I was either here making sure the renovations were being done, or at the office ordering the computer equipment I needed to be able to stay home with you. I have barely had time to concentrate on this project never mind remembering what you wanted washed! If you can't wait then why don't you do them yourself. You know how to use the washing machine!

RANDY

FINE ! *(Glares at ROBIN)* You just sit there and work! Don't worry about me!

*(Exit RANDY. He slams the door. ROBIN leans back in chair, removes glasses and rubs temples. Picks up picture of her and RANDY and stares at it.)*

## SCENE TWO

*(Living room ROBIN and RANDY'S house. Enter RANDY carrying a laundry basket full of clothes. The blue shorts are on top. Seconds later, Enter ROBIN)*

ROBIN

Randy.

RANDY

*(Stops, turns and faces ROBIN)* What?

ROBIN

*(Walks to RANDY and grabs basket out of his hands)* What are you doing?

RANDY

You're not blind! What the hell does it look like I'm doing!

ROBIN  
I said I'd do these later. Can't you wait?

RANDY  
No. I can't wait! I want my blue shorts now! Not when you decide you have time to wash them!

ROBIN  
Randy, you do have other clothes.

RANDY  
So what?

ROBIN  
So wear something else!

RANDY  
I told you I don't want to wear anything else! Don't you care about what I want?

ROBIN  
*(Stunned)* Wh-what?

RANDY  
You heard me! You're not deaf!

ROBIN  
*(Raises voice slightly, trace of anger in voice)* Randy, you know I care! I'm here. aren't I?

RANDY  
Do you really care? Where are my shorts?

ROBIN  
And what is that supposed to mean?

RANDY  
I don't think that you do care! (*Points finger at ROBIN*) I think you really get off on playing the suffering martyr role so that everyone will say, "Poor Robin, look at all the sacrifices she's making for her brother!" It's all a show! You are more con-

cerned with preserving your saintly image than you are about me!

ROBIN  
*(Shouts)* OH YOU THINK SO!

RANDY  
*(Momentarily stunned by ROBIN'S outburst; shouts louder)*  
YES, I THINK SO!

ROBIN  
*(Slightly sarcastic)* Well, brother dear, if I was so concerned with preserving my saintly image, as you call it, then I wouldn't be here with you!

RANDY  
Sure you would!

ROBIN  
Why?

RANDY  
Because you want everyone to think that you are such a devoted sister; if you left, your halo might tarnish, and we wouldn't want that to happen, would we?

ROBIN  
*(Shocked; stares at RANDY in disbelief)* I . . . can't believe . . . you . . . just said . . . that!

RANDY  
The truth hurts, doesn't it? Face it, Robin, you don't give a damn about me! If you did, you would have done the one thing I asked you to do and washed the blue shorts!

ROBIN  
*(Extremely angry)* Randy, I don't care about your shorts! And if I didn't care about you, I'd probably be staying at Mom and Dad's, going on business trips and leading a normal life! Instead, I'm here worrying about tearing down walls, making arrangement to work at home and spending every spare minute at the hospital with you!

RANDY

Hey, I didn't ask you to do this! I told you to leave! You wanted to stay! You made the promise, not me! I'm not holding you here at gun point! The door is always open, and you can walk out any time! So don't blame me just because you can't handle it anymore!

ROBIN

Randy, I am not a robot, I'm human! What more do you want from me?

RANDY

Robin, I want you to understand that I have AIDS and I'm dying. That's what's important now!

ROBIN

Randy, I know you're dying . . . but my work . . .

RANDY

Is not as important as my life!

ROBIN

So, I'm supposed to just drop everything and run every time you call . . . regardless of how much work I have to do?

RANDY

I wouldn't ask if it wasn't important!

ROBIN

And your shorts are more important than my software design?

RANDY

They are to me!

ROBIN

Well I'm sorry, Randy, but finishing this project is what matters right now! In case you forgot, I do need this Job! One of us has to pay the bills! So stop being so damn selfish!

RANDY

Robin, you have money! I've seen your bank books, remember?

You are far from being poor!

ROBIN

Tell me, Randy, just how long do you think that money will last? You don't get free medication, and all your visits to Dr. Carlin do add up; not to mention the cost of being hospitalized!

RANDY

I have medical insurance!

ROBIN

Your medical insurance doesn't even begin to cover the cost! You don't get the bills, I do!

RANDY

No one asked you to pay the bills! I can take care of them myself! I have money, too!

ROBIN

Sure you can, Randy! You have no job, no income and you think the money you have now will be enough? What happens the next time you get sick and have to be hospitalized?

RANDY

Why don't you just get the hell out of here! I don't need you! I don't need anyone!

ROBIN

You don't?

RANDY

No, I don't!

ROBIN

Fine! If you want to die alone, go ahead! But remember, I didn't walk away like everyone else until you told me to leave! Now who are you going to call when you can't breathe?

RANDY

I know how to dial nine one!

ROBIN

I hope so. Randy! No one else will be there when you call!  
(Throws basket of clothes against a wall and walks toward front door)

RANDY

(Yells) ROBIN. GO TO HELL!

ROBIN

(Yells) RANDY. I'M ALREADY THERE!  
(Exit ROBIN. She slams door.)

RANDY

(Kicks laundry basket) Damn her! Fine let her leave! I don't care if she never comes back! ( Walks over and picks up laundry basket) How dare she talk to me like that? She doesn't know what hell is! She's not dying! (Starts picking up clothes and throwing them in basket) One lousy pair of shorts! She couldn't even do that for me! I don't know why the hell I believed her! She doesn't love me. no one does! Everyone thinks that Robin is so damn perfect! Yeah, she's perfect all right; she's a perfect selfish bitch! ( Finishes picking up clothes; stands motionless holding basket) Okay! Great! The papers have all ready been signed! This is her house now, not our house! She pays all the bills! I'll move out! I'll find someplace else to live! I don't need her charity! Or her pity!

(RANDY is silent for a few moments. He puts the basket down, walks around the living room, Stops in front of a picture of him and ROBIN. He picks up the picture and stares at it. Tears fall from his eyes as he realizes he is alone. He leans against the wall.)

RANDY

(Screams) R . . . O . . . B . . . I . . . N!  
(There is absolute silence)

RANDY

(Slides down wall and sits on floor) Pl-please . . . come home . . . Robin . . . don't let me . . . die . . . alone . . . -I'm sorry! (Sobs)

### SCENE THREE

(Living room, same as in SCENE TWO.  
RANDY is sitting on the couch. There is a single red rose in a white tapered vase sitting on the table. Exit RANDY.  
Enter ROBIN through front door. At same time, Enter RANDY through kitchen door. He is holding a glass of milk and two chocolate chip cookies. He and ROBIN stare at one another in silence for a brief moment.)

RANDY

R-Robin . . . these are f-for you . . . (hands ROBIN the glass and the cookies. She hands him something.) Baseball cards! Do you know how long it's been since I bought baseball cards! I still have my collection somewhere!

(ROBIN walks to couch, sits down, puts glass on table and takes a bite from the cookie. RANDY walks to couch and sits near ROBIN)

ROBIN

Here, have a cookie ! (Playfully pushes a cookie in RANDY'S mouth. Picks up glass, takes a drink and puts glass on table)

(RANDY takes a bite of the cookie and then drink of milk from ROBIN'S glass.)

ROBIN

Look at you! (Wipes traces of milk and cookies from RANDY'S beard and mustache. Takes another drink of milk.)

RANDY

(Stares at ROBIN for a second, then picks up vase) This is for you! I cut it from the rosebush outside!

ROBIN

(Takes the vase, inhales fragrance of rose and smiles) It's beautiful, but why . . .

RANDY

I know how much you like roses . . and . . well . . I've always



thought of you as being as fragile and perfect as the most flawless rose!

ROBIN

I . . don't know . . what to say . . .

RANDY

You don't have to say anything!

ROBIN

But . . Randy . . I'm not . . perfect!

RANDY

About this afternoon, I'm . . .

ROBIN

Don't say anything. It's over now. Just leave it in the past!

RANDY

But . . .

ROBIN

Arguments like that are going to happen . . .

RANDY

Well, I hope we never have another fight like this one!

ROBIN

If we do, we'll get through it! (*Puts hands on RANDY'S shoulders*) Randy, don't worry. Regardless of how many times I walk out that door, I'll always come back! I'll never leave you! I promise!

*(A single tear slides down ROBIN'S cheek. RANDY puts his arms around ROBIN and holds her tightly.)*

THE END



*B&W Photograph by Nancy E. Anderson*

SPOTLIGHT  
DIANNE ZELLER

## The Adventure of Books and Books

Nostalgia fills my pores as I walk in the doorway. I am filled with a sense of serenity. The smells, the colors, and the sites both excite and calm me.

My emotions are soothed by the hue of the wooden floors and bookcases. The warm color seems to massage my weary muscles and bones. Familiar aromas of old and new books fills my mind of old friends, and the possibility of adventures with newly made acquaintances.

My mind is whirling with new titles as my eyes begin to scan every book trying to make a decision. It is said that a person when picking out a perfume, cannot distinguish more than three scents within an hour's time. My mind in a bookstore becomes overloaded just as in a perfumery, I can't decide what I want. I want it all!

As a child my grandparents made going to a bookstore, or library as important and fun as going to the zoo. It was a family outing to be cherished. Each of us would prepare for the coming event with enthusiasm. We would make up wish lists, and remind each other of newly acquired interest to be explored through reading. Once in the library or bookstore I was allowed to sit in the children's section and peruse the many fascinating topics and adventures available to my reading ability. I was encouraged to delve into whatever book I thought was interesting. I watched as both my grandparents went their separate ways and in their own worlds of discovery. Then on

our trip home we would talk about the exciting treasures we found and share our experiences together. At home we would separate into our favorite corners of our home and begin to read. We were in our own worlds, yet we were together enjoying our solitude.

This is the reason that bookstores have an intoxicating effect on me. This is why I get lost in a bookstore. This is why I can appreciate such a fine bookstore as Books and Books in Coral Gables.

Books and Books has the art of bookstores down to a fine science. They have the store decorated and lighted appropriately. Each room is a new adventure begging to be discovered. Such as the way the children's section is set apart from the rest of the bookstore. In there the light is bright, there is a small cheery sofa for a child to sit and make his or her choices. The books are set at an appropriate height for each age group; so a child could make an independent decision.

The rest of the bookstore was set up in other nooks and crannies. The shelves were crammed with reading material from floor to ceiling; each shelf promising excitement with a new consciousness.

Set off from the main room was a roped off stair case; that elicited in my curious mind a need to explore what lay atop. At my request the rope was ceremoniously removed for my ascent. The walls of the staircase were constructed of the

## Judgments Through The Raindrops

rich reddish paneling, as was the rest of the store. On those walls were black and white photographs depicting Coral Gables' history, giving you a sense of what lay ahead. At the crest of the staircase was a glass enclosed bookcase that held antique books of poetry and literature. The books in that case were leather bound with gold leaf lettering showing much wear and tear. The glass encasement disturbed me. I wanted to fondle those books...I wanted to smell their antiquity...feel their yellowed pages, all the while reading and absorbing their sense of history. To the left of that bookcase opened up a small room carpeted with a plush Hunter green carpeting that made my feet sink firmly, planting me into it, as if to keep me captured. The room held treasures such as the complete set of Oxford Dictionaries, original editions of Emily Dickinson, Hemingway, and Shakespeare. Off to the left of this room was yet another room. In that room there were more books that seemed to reach out to me to sit and enjoy great works of literature. There was a small window seat with soft cushions nestled deep within, asking to be cozied. I found myself wishing for more time, a life time to educate myself in Literature. I had the feeling I was sitting in the libraries of the worlds great authors, thinking perhaps if I stayed awhile I could experience what the artists of these literary works of art would have experienced. Then I laugh at myself and realize I truly am an "old soul." I reluctantly return to my friends and the 1990's, vowing to myself more time, and another visit.

The air is quiet and the light dim. The sound of rain on the shutters and the traffic in the distance makes the mood even more abashed. There are no melancholy melodies to be heard, no tears to be shed, only a penetrating sensation in the marrow of her core. She sits in her office late at night, wondering why...her thoughts racing incoherently, causing anguish. She ponders the reason, she questions the motives. Why? All the old feelings begin to haunt her confusion...all the agony creeps into her soul. On nights such as this she questions her validity.

She knows who she is. The stuff that she is made of is quality. Her life has been hurdle after hurdle. However, the character that makes her is built out of championing each and every obstacle that had been flung her way. However, tonight she wonders if anyone has noticed. Life is not to be easy otherwise life goes unappreciated, or at least this is how she justifies the lean times.

She is astonished at how others perceive her. Some people find her brilliant, others find her opinionated. She has been accused of being self-absorbed yet there are some who would attest to her selflessness. Allies would envy her tireless energy and enthusiasm, still others would consider her aggressive.

Yet, she sits at night listening to the slow raindrops on the shutter, wishing she could be understood. No one ever took the time to ask, they just assumed. She tried to be heard, but the presumptions negated her voice. She knows that the judgement is best passed by the one being judged. Should she question her judgement? Is it important to know why...who cares? Damn it, I do!!!



"What's Going On?" Ink Drawing by Paul Ng

## Of Syphillis And Methodone

*With every resolution  
comes a death*

King George-my poisonous death-  
Suicide slowly-lick my wrists with a dull knife  
tawny red rust seep into my skin  
putrify my bloodline  
a Syphillis, a  
    help-me-i'm-corroding-syphillis  
my skin puke yellow my  
    hair dishwatery-shit-would-be-brown  
my eyes scream nauseous behind a steel door  
(surely the lepresy will kick in soon  
    -welcome as a bowel movement-  
to purge these impotent body parts)

here comes the insanity-  
    a lie  
the insanity has been here from the beginning-  
that's what they don't tell you about syphillis

• • • •

private citizen michael  
    A Rebirth  
my methodone my shadow my counterpart my dance partner  
my equal my teacher my student  
    but not Mine

A criminal just like me  
    Who sins just like me  
And shines just like me  
    Loves just like me  
Leaves just like me  
    but not Me

No leading no following no landing on my head only to take off...  
Which one of you-you Self? or you Ego?  
    which one of you conjured up this box of rain?  
We live as a grace note to time  
Stuffing our moments with past and future  
    swallowing our present like a thick clot of honey

He dies every time he comes  
to me

His suicide is drawing to a close only moments after mine  
And I am the bullet that follows the incompetent knife.

-Allison Salmon

## PRODIGY

Perhaps  
time truly has no meaning  
Content  
has the ruling hand  
with art as its guide  
Death  
a privilege and a punctuation  
that follows only after  
Perfection  
dying young a sign of  
Brilliance  
recording on high speed  
sucking the head of your life

no books to read  
no instruction manual  
Instinct  
light up the sky  
scream out the name of the creator  
ejaculate the primal fire  
sure to burn the young catalyst  
who knows nothing of such blow jobs

call them gifted  
call them violated  
call them messiahs  
the uncautious young who are truly free and untainted  
are the first molested

Premature  
the orgasm is glorious  
but  
has no time to back it  
has no raw redness that comes only from time's friction  
no claws to dig into the ocean's bottom  
flushed and ready, begging  
*please*  
NOW  
*oh god i can't take any more*

eyes roll back, fluttering  
muscles short circuit  
body functions fail  
body fluids flow  
the symphony booms out in climax  
the soprano cleanses the air until  
she collapses, blue  
Birth  
Death  
Life  
Gone

There are no A's and B's  
no honor roll  
no demerits  
Pass or Fail  
and the existentialists sing  
do-da-do da-do do-da-do  
do da-do da-do do da-do...doooo  
Indeed  
Camus sold his soul to the devil

And the prodigies who die before their time  
stand in front of the iron gates  
bawling that they didn't mean it  
they don't know what humility is but  
the salt in their tears gives the humble ocean its buoyancy

their mothers back down in the dirt  
pleading with the beast  
with their blood-curdling *pleases*  
*and he listens*  
calmly looking quite quietly rational  
and then...

He utters his first words  
*Did you breast feed?*  
And the mother grasping hoping submitting  
laying down on her back and spreading her legs howls her offerings  
*Yes! Yes I did!*  
and the beast lowers his sneering voice and growls  
*Toughened your nipples didn't it?*

- Allison Salmon

### Cerebral Regurgitation

Have you come to comfort me, In my state of misanthropy  
To ask me why I still deny a hand in man's divinity?  
But you see... I have seen the double standards and iniquity  
I believe not what I see, for my eyes deceive me... Yes indeed.  
Don't get the wrong impression of me, for I am not at all a nihilist  
Yes I've been stricken by reality and my blood drips its blasphemy  
You cannot hope yet to understand man, he's just an animal... A  
super animal  
With all the power to destroy all that he sees... Everything he sees.

I had a dream once; a morbid dream... A dream where death, it had  
come for me  
And there was no such divinity, no glory be, no life for me  
It was a dream of a thousand worms gnawing at the meat inside my  
head  
As I laid there, I'd disseminate... A little piece of me in each being.  
The dream changes to underground, so many miles beneath the  
ground  
A thousand me's burrowing deep- To see the Queen, to fuck the  
Queen  
Tiamat, she was there for me, all obsessed with the sight of me  
Mother Earth, she consumed me... Took me deep, buried deep- ec-  
stasy.  
Then the belly of the worm split in twain, spewing forth an Incubus  
with the head of the savior.  
In union, we recoiled in fright... (What a sight, for me to see)  
We raised up the corpse man-child and impaled in upon a cross of  
nails  
One thousand nails, one thousand pinholes- One for each worm  
that made themselves part of me.

Awake and slouching in a pool of sweat, pinpricks of visions fading  
away from me  
I contemplate all things I've seen as the wind whispers "Heresy!"  
I've now discovered the meaning of Evil; It's simply man's unfail-  
ing will to live  
One half ready for living... the other half, equally prepared to die.

### The Enchantress

Who art thou, oh sorceress  
With eyes of livid blue...  
Whose very countenance haunts me,  
Whose skin, fair as the moon.  
A playful shadow when I turn,  
Coincidence indeed...  
Expecting you to enchant me  
What is it that you need?

Oh dainty, minute beauty  
With sweetness as a Sylph,  
What power hast thou on me?  
What magic have you willed?  
To this lone Knight of Pentacles  
I ask, "Are you the one?"  
For now it seems like nothing  
But are you the Queen of Wands?

Is fate there smiling at me  
As the tarot come to play  
A part in my salvation  
As this women steps my way.  
You surely have bewitched me  
If I meet you in my dreams  
Shall we now test the waters,  
Or are things not as they seem?

Oh mystic, mortal creature,  
Be gone, or make your play.  
To this lonely, morbid magus  
Your very presence makes me sway.  
Oh shield your beauty from me  
And those ardent, angelic eyes.  
I can no longer work nor dream  
For you have me mesmerized.

## Atheistic Dreams

Agathosthecles Di Paramenticostes  
To say my name is to admit defeat  
Who can try to take me  
Satan and God betrayed me  
I am not of Sheol, I am of me!

    You know I am Demigod  
        Revelations to you  
The Tempter holds no torch to me  
    For I can see right through you  
    Drewcifer is what I am  
        Agathos is me...

Morbid rigidity amuses me  
I accept death in its vitality  
Vigor of Necros, done unto me  
So it was written, so mote it be

    I am madness in all its forms  
    I am your death, in which I am reborn  
    I lust for Chaos, Nyctophile... ME!  
    I am the one Agathosthecles.

Pools of regurgitated mass  
Inflicted with fires below  
Gastro-entero-necrotic spumes  
Disgust the most holy of foes.

    Holy divinity- One reborn... Impaled, inverted cross  
    Melancholy Mephisto is bound, he weeps now for his loss  
    Inverted star, upright cross... Good and evil deceased  
    None to stand and face the wrath of Agathosthecles!!



*"Self-Portrait" Acrylic Painting by Drewcifer*

# Rapture Of A Lapper

by

Irving Pudalov

Harvey contemplated the swimming pool. The blue-green water simmered in a northeasterly wind, and shadows frolicked on the pool floor. This was the day he had spent a year preparing for. This was the day he would climb his Mt. Everest; this was the day he would swim 100 laps. He rubbed some spittle into his swim goggles, adjusted them carefully over his eyes, made a few perfunctory stretches, and dove into the pool.

Harvey had never been a good swimmer, and even now he did not consider himself much improved. His breathlessness and arm fatigue after a few laps suggested he might not be a well man. The thought churned in his mind, but he refused to see a doctor. At 50 years of age he was not yet old enough to glimpse his mortality.

The cool water enveloped him, and once again he felt the fleeting magic of buoyancy. He wished the water were colder. Harvey knew that after forty laps, his body would suffer the heat of his exertions.

He swam ten laps and his worst fears began to be realized; his breathing became labored, his arms leaden. A breast stroke or a side stroke would give him some respite, but that would diminish his achievement. No, he would not succumb and wait for those erratic tides within his mind to tell him to try again. Soon his endorphins would kick in and euphoria would diffuse through him. No matter what the price, he would have his fix.

Twenty laps, and he didn't think he could endure. His arms barely escaped the water to make their strokes. His lungs gulped at the air like a fish floundering on a beach. To his dismay Harvey realized he had lost his lap count. Is he at 24 or 26? This was no time to chisel away at what might be a tremendous achievement. Make it 24.

Forty laps, he was swimming easier. His arms had lost their heaviness, his breathing rhythmical and controlled.

Swimming held no enchantment for him. It was unadulterated drudgery; but today the sheer boredom of swimming was mitigated by the challenge he had set.

Fifty laps, and he wondered if the pool phantoms would begin to materialize. He knew them well; had loved them in his youth, but had despoiled and squandered their love. The music of their voices, the scent of their perfume wafted through the water, and he knew they were back. They were nude; sunlight shimmered on their skin as they danced an ethereal choreography. He stroked toward them for just a touch, a kiss, but they danced away. Were they here to mock and taunt him? His goggles fogged and sobs interrupted his breathing. As if to comfort a crying child they returned to encircle and embrace him. He felt enveloped within the contours of their bodies. Their tresses feathered his face, his body, smothering his vision. After a few moments of delicious blindness they were gone. Once again love lost.

Sixty laps, and to his amazement, it was getting easier. His hands tugged the water effortlessly. He could swim forever. Harvey had found perpetual motion - his nirvana. He would swim 200 laps, perhaps into infinity.

Eighty laps - his coordination on that flip-turn was awkward. He felt overheated, over ventilated, a bit dizzy. "Don't use that word" a doctor once said to him. "It's a meaningless expression." The world swam, he swam, and God damn it, he was dizzy, dizzy, dizzy.

Ninety laps, and his forward motion seemed to have stopped. Perhaps he was swimming backwards and should be counting backwards. One foot felt frozen and he decided he was suffering from frostbite. You can get frostbite climbing Mt. Everest. Now if he could ascend that wind-blown slope he would be on top of the mountain. The Queen would lay a sword on his back and say, "I dub thee Sir Harvey, Knight of the Realm." He thought the Queen best be careful with that



sword because she had inadvertently stabbed him. The pain radiated through his chest.

One hundred laps. His head collided with the tile at the end of the pool. He was only faintly aware that he had achieved his goal. Unable to move, he hung motionless on the rim. After a few moments, he raised his right arm, and with great effort stripped off his swim goggles. His feet searched for the pool bottom, and he tried to stand. They would not support him. His fingers were deeply wrinkled, and he wondered why. Did he have wrinkled fingers at birth? If only he could be reborn, but the wish was not as exhilarating as he thought it should be. Harvey closed his eyes, fatigue quilted his mind. He was breathing normally. His nose began to spill mucous and he wiped it away with the back of his hand. His mouth felt dry, his tongue wooden. The cold of the mountain top had chilled him. A cloak of rapture began to encircle him, and Harvey felt its warmth, its caress. Slowly, unsteadily he mounted the pool steps. The pain where the Queen had stabbed him was excruciating, but it was all worth it.

He sagged into a deck chair and wondered with whom he could share his bliss. His wife, children, friends could never understand what this achievement meant to him. For Harvey it was a monumental triumph that would nurture his spirit for years. It would be an antidote to the depression that permeated his existence. It was an escape from the insomniac darkness of his life.

Harvey remained poolside feeling his fatigue dissipate. Rivulets of sweat puddled the creases and crevices of his body. His sense of elation quietly subsided. He sat becalmed. Deep sleep, something denied him during the long nights of his life, overcame him. He dreamt of his 100 lap swim, and as before, at 50 laps his past loves appeared. A splash of water on his chest awakened him, but there was no water on his chest, just that stabbing pain.

No one was about, but the water was agitated, turbulent. He looked into the pool, and there they were, waiting for him, beckoning. He struggled to his feet, his dizziness returned, and he toppled into the pool. A cradle of arms cushioned his descent. Harvey could feel the tenderness of their embrace, the passion of their kisses, their melancholia.



"Sunday Afternoon" Pencil Drawing by Michael Dickins



*"Patience" Acrylic Painting by Cherie Liss*

# It's A Beautiful Day In The Neighborhood...

by

Lois Schiman

John and Martha Dombrowski swallowed their Cheerios in abject silence. (Their television set had expired the evening before-right after the Six O'Clock News-so they were in mourning... that morning.)

Lord knows they had obtained professional help immediately, but its condition was hopeless. Costly transplants had been rejected twice; it was time to pull the plug.

The deceased was removed quietly-with no display of tears-only a sense of great personal loss...and a clean space on the carpet.

Spooning his last mouthful, John stood, a bit unsteadily, and headed for the front door to get the paper. He found it, near the curbside, lying in a puddle. Miraculously his grief was forsaken. He felt almost whole again as he stormed back into the house and slammed the door behind him. He tossed the sopping paper into the trash can and got out the telephone book. Then he called The Miami Herald and gave them HELL...feeling more and more like his old self.

Martha was on her second piece of toast by then, and she could not surpress an audible sigh of disappointment. She had always saved her second piece of toast for Willard Scott. It simply would not taste the same that day.

She glanced over at John. He was still a funny shade of purple,

so she thought it best not to remind him of the football game that was scheduled to be telecast that evening.

"More coffee, Dear?" she proffered, instead.

"Of course I want more coffee, Woman!" he said. "Don't I always have a second cup of coffee? Haven't you poured me a second cup of coffee every morning for thirty years?...For God's Sake! (maybe she's got that Alzheimers or something? he thought; like they were talking about on Sally Jesse the other day.)

"I think it's going to rain, Dear," Martha said, timidly, just searching for something to say.

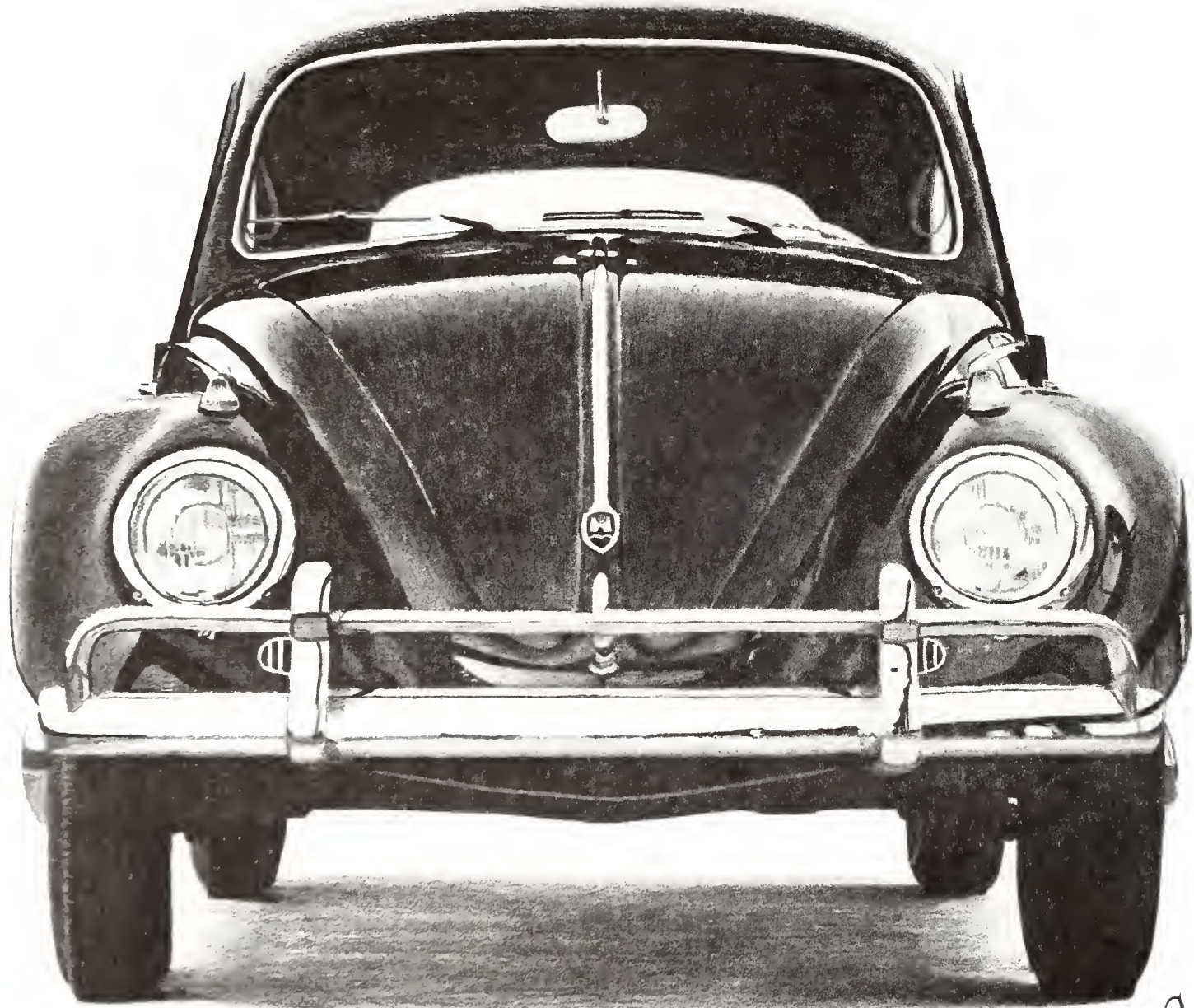
"It already rained, Martha," he answered sarcastically, pointing to the sodden mess in the trash.

Suddenly their eyes met...and held. And in just that magical moment they were each struck with the same appalling realization that, without "Oprah", "Alex", or even "Days of Our Lives", they would be forced to spend that WHOLE day alone together.

"Grab your coat, Martha. I'll get the keys," John snapped.

Martha didn't even stop to comb her hair. She just jumped into her sneakers, threw a coat on over her housedress and grabbed her Master Card.

They were just in time for Sears to open its doors.



*Angela Esper*

*"The First One" Pencil Drawing by Angela Jean Esper*

## No Title Necessary

How stupid can I be?  
not to look and see  
that this public facility  
has toilet paper? Before I PEE!

Dangling from the seat  
just staring at my feet  
I shiver from the thought  
of wiping not! I need a lot.

*-Tracy Duffy*

## untitled

BIG RED APPLE  
small green worm  
BIG HUGE HAND  
small green worm  
BIG WHITE TEETH  
small green worm  
BIG LOUD CRUNCH  
two small green worms.

*-Amy Higginbotham*

## Walt Whitman

Thirteen young women shower by the waterfall,  
Thirteen young women, each one of them smiling;  
Thirteen years of boyish life and all so unexciting.

He owns the gym shorts, soiled with sweet,  
He hides bug-eyed and pimply aft the hole in the tiles.

Which of the women attracts him most?  
Oh the silliest among them is his favorite.

Sneaking and giggling through the Amazon came the fourteenth showerer  
Unseen and unheard by the others, and ogling all of them.

The manes of the lionesses cascade with wet,  
Little brooks gathered and flowed across their bodies.

A concealing hand also caressed their bodies,  
descending nervously from their cheeks and chests.

The young women float along the streams of their smooth cleanliness, their bodies  
swell to the shower heads, they do not ask who grasps at them,  
They do not know who hyperactively suckles with reaching and extended arm,  
They do not know who souses them with spray.

*- Ron Ferraro*

SPOTLIGHT  
CERAMICS/POTTERY



*"Hindu Fish Bowl" Clay Pottery by Karen Labarga*



*"Self-Portrait Mask" Clay Sculpture by Karen Labarga*



*"Ism #1" Raku by Susan L. Feldman*



*"Ism #5" Raku by Susan L. Feldman*



*"Looking Up" Stoneware*



*"Beautiful Dreamer" Stoneware*



*"Two Faced" Stoneware*

## Perversity

Why is it that we love to inflict  
pain?  
Even the young ones take life in  
vain.  
The busy ant scuttling along the  
sidewalk,  
Carrying cargo across words written in  
chalk.  
The boy watches it with keen  
interest,  
Then brings down his thumb and puts  
it to rest.

- *Frank P. Duris, Jr.*

## Shadows

Silently, I notice the differences  
between other people and myself.  
One does not rise above,  
nor does one fall below  
but each different individual  
remains stable and constant  
in standing.

The ones who die  
are swiftly replaced  
and the equilibrium  
remains.

Silently, I noticed the similarities  
Between other people and myself.  
One does not rise above.

Nevermore  
will I cower amidst  
the shadow of  
another man.

- *Richard Riggs*



## Sharing Immortality

Sleek, marble fingers  
cause chills as they  
skim my fiery cheek.  
Ashen, icy lips linger  
on my flushed face,  
send shivers through  
my fevered body.  
Waxy lips glide along  
my innocent neck and  
an anxious mouth parts on  
the heated flesh of my throat.  
Teeth—oh no, not teeth, but fangs,  
Fangs tear into my tender neck.  
He becomes satiated with my life and  
gives it back to me as death.

- *Kelly McIntire*

Death slips through my fingertips.  
I wonder what it will taste like  
when I do greet it.

Will it be sweeter than  
the summer salts of the sea,  
or will it taste hot and putrefactive,  
all atoms ricocheting,  
and scald my palate?

Will the scent fill my lungs,  
strong as a swimmer's,  
with thoughts of unity  
as I chant "uprising",  
or will flames tease my toes  
like woodpeckers searching  
for hollow marrow?

Will my love greet me  
with outward smiling arms,  
or will she curse at me  
as my ears cringe  
for not having caught her?

- *Rob Riggs*



Mixed Media by Savita Singh

## Flashback

Summer of love  
1967  
everybody knockin'  
on the doors of heaven  
granny glasses  
love beads  
bellbottoms  
hairweaves  
dodge the draft, boycott class  
reform society in a field of grass.

Woodstock  
1969  
people for peace  
of the communal mind  
love, hugs  
hippies, drugs  
music, bands  
campers, vans  
treat your neighbor like your brother  
get together, love each other.

1970's  
death has come  
Janis Joplin  
Hendrix and Morrison  
War is over  
the heroes return,  
gradual declining  
of the doctrines we learned.

80's-90's  
more of the same.  
Hippies gain weight  
with beards closely shaved.  
Car jackings  
crack babies  
brutal attackings  
satanic slayings.  
In this time of presidential democracy  
should the only concern be economic stability?

Era of love  
and peace for mankind-  
I welcome your rebirth  
with an impatient mind.

- Richard Riggs

## Unchanging

Bernice - Bernice!  
Don't you hir me callin' you gal?

I's done told you 'bout not  
anserin' me  
when I calls you.  
What you been doin' so  
you can't come when I calls you chil'?

I's sorry Mama.

Sorry don't make the world  
go 'round baby,  
Yous best to remember dat.

Yes Mama - Mama, I's been thinkin'.

Yes baby?

I's a woman, right?

Jus' a sho as you was born.

And I's a beautiful woman, ain't I?

Jus' like the midnight sky.

And my head - ain't its' kinda smart?

Yous talkin' ain't cha chil'?

Well - how comes I's made to feel like  
I's nothing, I's ugly, and I's don't know  
Adam from Eve?

Yous black chil'-  
Yous black.

- LaShaunda Lowry



"Atanva Polynesia" Colored Pencil Drawing by JCR

## Falling Off The Edge

AFRAID TO LOOK BELOW  
I CAN'T HELP BUT TO THINK THE WORST.  
HOLDING ON WITH THE LITTLE STRENGTH I HAVE LEFT,  
I FEEL THIS OVERWHELMING SENSATION TO FLY.

I LET GO.

I SLIP INTO THE DARKNESS OF THE NIGHT.  
FEELING ONLY THE WIND SEEP THROUGH ME.

I SOAR.

A FEELING OF COMPLETE AND UTTER TRANQUILLITY,  
FILLS WITHIN ME.

I AM ONE.

- Elizabeth Visconty

Background : A China librarian by the name of *Lao-tse* created a religion called the Tao Te Ching which means The Way. No one is sure just how long Lao-tse lived, but people have traced back his life and found he was over 500 years old. When Lao-tse was presumed dead, time went on and over hundreds of years later a Chinese dictator found Lao-tse's journals, and made the while country of China follow Lao-tse's ways or be sentenced to death. (Worldbook 72)

## Power

What is this word that haunts mankind.  
A word that all of us know and none comprehend.  
The sky to most are their power, to others is knowledge.  
To me, power is looking into a mirror and watch it gaze back.  
Showing me a choice I must make, a choice all of us have but fail to follow. A perfect power, a perfect piece of art.  
To follow it is idiotic, to listen to it is a crime, to believe in it is unethical. Those who do not listen to their power are considered freaks, those who do are proclaimed as gods.

- Ross Goldstein

## Love Is...

Sitting naked-Alone

Eating coconut

Listening to the blues

Knowing everything's going to be o.k.

Staring:

into an empty refrigerator

a basket with month old laundry

the blinking red light on the answering machine-  
announcing bill collectors' agonies.

Smelling:

The sweet mixture of marijuana and sage.

Caressing:

Unshaved legs.

Feeling:

Sensuous-Alone.

- Danae E. Bergman

## Great Company

great company

Gertrude Stein,

Alice B. Toklas,

Hemingway-

to sit fire side

against blades of grass

so green

mother's nature starched, pressed,

and stained each blade with green tint-

by the blaze we play

our pompous filthy wit

tongue in hand not cheek

we play

greet company

picnic to Paris by way of car

then back to Piccadilly lane

we sip tea as fallen leaves display

no worry

just the color of words

Ms. Stein, Ms. Toklas,

Mr. Hemingway

great company

- Pamela G. Greenside



"Matin" Acrylic Painting by Sherry Williamson

## An Antique's Reflection

OH, mirror, mirror, in the hall  
Why dwell on imperfection?  
Accentuating warts-and-all  
Ye cast such harsh reflection.

Where hides the maiden from my gaze?  
The slender virgin bride.  
The comely lass of yesterdays,  
Whose husband viewed with pride.

AH, Would'st that thou might kinder be  
To better serve my needs.  
Inside there dwells a Fairer me-  
Replete with goodly deeds.

A Me that tended man and beast  
With willing heart and ready smile.  
One who, methinks, you might at last  
Enshroud with beauty yet awhile.

- Lois Schiman

# Jim Takes Aim

by

E. Santo-Miguel

The little band sat in a corner twanging out smarmy little tunes at the Carlson's Communications Awards and Retirement Banquet. One of the "honorees" was an elderly man named Jim, "retired" at sixty-four, right before he was eligible for a company pension. Jim sat quietly by himself, at a table with others, but alone with only his thoughts. The pleasantries of the scene held no interest for him- he ignored those at his table like they weren't even there- in the half an hour that he'd been sitting there waiting for his ten seconds at the podium he hadn't bothered to straighten his elbow to reach for an hors d'oeuvre or his glass of wine. He looked at the bottle which sat among some ice at the center of the table, read the label and thought to himself, California. Goddamn California wine. Couldn't even get me some stuff from France maybe; or even Italy would have been fine, he reasoned. Goddamn Ernest and Julio bullshit! He cut his eyes at the bottle, and settled his mind back on his original thoughts.

"Respect". It was all about respect. The word rang through his mind again and again, and eventually he had to shake his head to rid himself of the recurring and increasingly loud Aretha refrain "just a little bit". Suddenly Jim broke back into the events of the room, and the sparse applause as well as the expectant stares of those at his table alerted him to his name having been called. This geezer's up to bat, he thought to himself as he got up, the gun hanging heavy in his pocket.

As Jim strode towards the stage his eyes twinkled, and as he looked out into the sea of darkened faces - the lights in the hall being quite dim, only the first three or four rows comprised of distinguishable faces from his position on the

steps leading up to the podium. He smiled wryly. He shook the amiable MC's hand, as more of an afterthought than anything else. Having reached the velvet-covered podium, the deep red of the fabric reminding Jim of the wine back at his table, he tapped the mic three times, looked around at the six or seven people seated behind him, blew into the mic, and then after loudly clearing his throat, he adjusted the position of the mic a few times.

As the crowd began to stir with impatience, Jim raised his head slowly and averted his eyes and attention from some papers he had found on the podium and was now perusing. His aggravation was not masked in any way. "You're not all rushing me, are you?" Jim asked. "I know you're not. I've given better than forty-five years to this company, and by God I'm gonna have a few minutes to say what I've got to say. Capiz?". Jim looked down again at the papers, and continued looking through them, close enough to the mic that the rustling sounded loudly and annoyingly over the speaker system. Nothing in the stack interested him, so he dropped it at his feet. "Vesura, queridos, vesura".

"Anyway, I'd like to know something," Jim picked up. "What do forty-five years mean? Nothing?" Jim got no response. He stared at the crowd, waiting for a response. "Anybody?" Still there was no reply. Jim could see that the crowd was more than a little perplexed by his disposition, his prolonged presence at the podium, and the accompanying motives. Their quiet bemusement didn't sit well with Jim.

They were trying to steal his thunder, to rob him of his moment. This was something he would not stand for, and as

he reached into the right pants pocket of his pin-striped gray suit, his mind flashed back to how it was when he was a little kid, and how his one recourse when it came to getting attention from his parents was to grab a hold of their clothing, pants leg or whatever, and tug repeatedly. (They always seemed so preoccupied). The feel of the cool, smooth metal that greeted his foray into his pocket was decidedly unlike that of the coarse texture of the cotton his parents were so fond of wearing. He figured cotton had its virtues, particularly in regard to keeping the Minneapolis cold out, especially for a couple of native Puerto Ricans like his papa and mama were. The sight of the gun in his hand brought him back to the here and now.

The crowd had evidently seen the gun, and there were gasps and various noises coming from them. Jim didn't pay attention to the hubbub, however, and he quietly placed the 38 revolver on the podium. Just then he sensed some movement behind him. As he turned, he reached out and drew the gun closer to him. He cast an unduly casual glance back at those behind him. He was as cool as the bit of metal sculpture in his hand. A man in a blue suit to his right, a young executive of the company Jim assumed, was halfway out of his chair, knees bent, heroic intent flashing in his excited eyes. Jim said nothing, he simply waited. "Sir....."

"That's a good start," Jim interrupted, "but you're cutting into my time here. Sit down."

"Sir", the young man continued, standing upright now, relieved of his frozen position. He took a step forward. Jim curled his finger around the trigger, the gun now by his side.

"Unless I'm as senile and half-witted as these dammed people say I am, I could swear I told you to sit down. Now if you'd rather lie down..." Jim said the last line suggestively, the gun pointed at the aspiring hero. Jim could see he had gotten the message as he retreated to his seat. Jim stared him into his chair and then said "Don't do that again. Uncle Jim'll

be very angry if you do". He turned back to the mic, menace having left him. He put the gun down next to him.

The band had long since ceased to nauseate the gathering, their eyes, like everyone else's now trained on Jim. The high hat was still, the bass' strings quiet. Jim liked it. Even musicians, whom he had always thought to be an irreverent and unsavory lot, were now mindful of him. They were giving him respect. The respect he deserved.

"I've been with this company for forty five years. I knew the founder personally. He knew how to treat people, that's why this company got as big as it is now. I was one of the first people Earl Carlson hired. I was his main accountant. I've balanced more books than you people could ever hope to. Then I make one damn mistake or so I was told. Costed the company thousands. The word embezzlement even came up. Embezzlement! I have never stolen a damn thing. I wouldn't think of it. Earl Carlson was too good a man, and he was too nice a boss."

"I was nineteen when he hired me, and he called me Mr. Santana. Yeah, the boss called me Mr. Santana. Now all you young guys have taken over and you want to put me out to pasture. If Earl was still alive this shit wouldn't happen. Not ever. And it ain't gonna happen now either. What do you think about that?"

Jim reached for the gun, and just then his eyes caught something at his feet. A cockroach! Jim hated roaches. When his family had first moved to the States they spent their first months in a run-down apartment building. When he was about five he woke up one night to find three or four cockroaches on him. They were helping themselves to a bit of candy cane he had not finished eating when he fell asleep. It was still in his hand and on it were the roaches, their hairy legs and waving antennae were more than enough to elicit a shriek of terror. He flashed his hand about frantically as he sprang from the



bed and ran to his sleeping parents' side. He had never forgotten that.

Jim also never forgot how the landlord, a weasel-faced man of unusual height used to talk to his father. Jim's father was a man of about six feet, maybe a little more. But the landlord, Johnston, was easily six-six or six-seven, and he would rap loudly at the door whenever he came for the rent. Jim would always run out to see who was knocking, and he could remember Johnston standing there like some headless giant, his head made invisible by the top of the door frame. "Santana" Johnston would say to Jim's father while looking down at him through pale gray eyes. "Got the money?" Those were always his words, "Got the money?" Jim hated those words, and the way Johnston always stood just outside the door, as if his feet were too good to cross that imaginary line that separated the hallway from his family's apartment, to touch their floor.

Jim's dad would turn over the hundred dollars, all the bills flat and pressed, and Johnston would take them by holding the far end of the bills, not wanting to touch Jim's dad's hand assumedly, and roll them up, crumple them, right there in front of them. Jim's dad would stare down at Johnston's hand as he shoved the crumpled bills into his right pocket, always his right pocket.

One day he looked up at Johnston and said "We've got roaches". Jim thought his dad's voice sounded different, strange, almost timid. He tried to catch his dad's lips moving, but he didn't. "I bet they're the Puerto Rican variety" Johnston said. He smiled, the only time he had ever smiled, shoved the rent money into his pocket and turned and left. The word respect was just barely a part of young Jim's vocabulary, but he knew what it meant, and it killed him to see his father treated the way Johnston treated him. And he hated those damned roaches.

And now at his feet was a disgusting cockroach. It had scurried from under the podium and then suddenly stopped right at his feet. Gun in hand Jim lifted his right foot slowly, and then brought it down as hard and as swiftly as he could. The bug darted away, but in a fit of confusion turned back towards Jim. Jim's eyes widened and he leapt into the air. As he landed he tried again to squash the insect, but it eluded him. Jim was now stomping with both feet, and he looked like a can-can dancer gone mad. The roach did crazy figure eights, circling one way and then the next, round and round.

As the hall emptied, the hundred and fifty or so people scurrying out, some tangled up in chairs and tables, others hurdling them, cutlery clanging to the floor, platters everywhere. Jim looked about wide-eyed, his head swiveling around the room. "Hey! Come back! Where're you going?! Oye! Come back, damn it!" He raised the gun, the action bereft of any real conviction. "Don't make me shoot one of you, man!" he yelled after his fleeing audience. Jim felt like a postal worker. His yells doing little to stem the tide through the door, Jim pointed the gun to the ceiling, and fired. The bullet hit one of the lights overhead, producing a drizzle of glass from which Jim shielded himself with his raised forearms.

The roach having had his chance for escape, took it. "Hey!" Jim screamed as the last of the crowd disappeared through the door, a musician among them, accordion in tow. "Damn it! Come back!" Jim yelled again. He plopped to the floor sulkily, gun still in hand. Even the cucaracha had run out on him.

"Garbage, darlings, garbage."



*B&W Photograph by James A. Rosco*

## Wooden Shoes

Wooden shoes stomp past  
windmills in the distance,  
shadows of dragons.  
Salty air from the sea  
drifts death through the air.  
Winds rage  
fossils of fury  
claws in the rock.  
Tulips extend red petals,  
withered hands,  
blood stains the ground.  
The shoes stomp on.

- *Natascha Polderman*



"Metal Life" Graphite Drawing by Man Lai Cheng

one

I said I'm African. You would think European would fit.  
Is it the color of my skin?

Who's to label?  
Who's to take the label?  
Why do the labeled accept it?

Someone said, We think we can label a thing once we have understood it."

I would be labeled a Haitian for my struggle to gain acceptance in society.  
I would be labeled a Palestinian for my deep religious beliefs and faiths.  
I would be labeled a Russian for my ancestral struggles to be free.

I want to be free from hate.  
I want to be free from discrimination.  
I want to be free from the *color war*.

I look like you, and you, and you; same female characteristics.  
What is this "thing" that says I'm different.  
Our hair colors, faces, and body structures are different,  
but you have a heart the same as mine,  
you have a mind the same as mine,  
and you have eyes the same as mine.

Is it what we see out of these eyes that makes us, different? Is that it?

So you call me "white".

Does that mean I don't bleed the same as you if I was cut?  
Does that mean my tears are different than yours if I cry?  
Does that mean the love in my heart is different too?

I can not *see* it. Is it something that was taught? Where was this learned?

Does "white" give a clearer understanding of me?

The saying should have been then,

"We think we can understand a thing **once** we have labeled it."

I do not want anyone held accountable for *my* actions.  
I am me, and you are you.  
Each of us has our own set of fingerprints.  
Can't we live together without being glued together in categories.

I don't want the freedom our ancestors  
sought in America, to only be found within their label of  
Polish, Russian, Chinese, Swiss...

The eyes of others them within boundaries of a label.

Who's to label?  
Who's to take the label?  
Why do the labeled accept it?

Who's to say I'm not Black. *You?*  
I feel their struggle to be colorless in our society.  
I feel their need to be free.  
Who says I am not Black?

My point is **people**.  
You and I.  
You and her.  
You and Him.  
us.

us as one.

- Elizabeth Priore



*B&W Photograph by Pia Davis*

SPOTLIGHT  
JAMES EVAN JACOBY

**Dreamchaser**

I am the Dreamchaser.  
Sometimes I stagger,  
sometimes I fall;  
sometimes I remember.

For I am the Dreamchaser,  
always reaching for visions in color  
and twisted symbols  
and imagined sounds;  
and when I overtake,  
I unlock and release.

And these films show me-  
they open and show me myself.  
And they sing and speak:  
fear and love, spirit and health  
and solitude.

But still, I am the Dreamchaser,  
and sometimes I lag and tire  
which poisons me with loss  
and burdens me with confusion.

And this disquieting failure-  
it bends and tears at my secrets  
and it shuts out my essence  
and leaves me to grasp and hunt  
for an eternity,  
as Dreamchaser.

**Florida Room Coffin**

We practiced extending chaos  
until we got it right  
and ripe with results.

We moved:  
From Paradise  
to Purgatory,  
you established the positive;  
whereas I knew the nightmare,  
condensed in  
a minute  
closet-spaced  
melancholy.  
Here is suffering  
or suffocation,  
crumpled inside  
and denied privacy.

But even hell is worth enduring  
if the result is that alluring.

### Park Solitude

Last I passed upon these paths  
My mouth embraced ambrosian lips;  
Love-warmed arms wound light about  
And hungrily hugged near your hips.

Last I passed upon these paths  
We strayed behind bushes we'd find  
And there combine in masked delight,  
Making love within our minds.

Last I passed upon these paths  
Caresses weaved inside and out.  
Pleasure danced and smiles lingered;  
Forever paused, forgetting doubt.

Now I pass along, alone,  
With journal screaming from inside.  
Observations brushed in ink  
Remind me how I lost my guide.

### I Put Religion In A Box

I put religion in a box  
and sold it-  
door to door.  
And you can only imagine  
the price some people will pay

for salvation,  
for purification-

I baptise  
with science  
and with crucified commercialism.

Buy my book!  
God is a hit.  
His bestselling story,  
in easy to read cliff-noted glory,  
has fallen to number two.

I write it in English-  
not Greek, or Hebrew, or whatever.  
I write it with Charlton Heston in mind.

And my students,  
and my followers,  
with their keen litigious minds,  
keep me there, alive,  
in your teevee sets,  
and bookshelves,  
and newspapers  
and magazines,

and around your soul  
like air-

# Five

by

Paul Cordova

**O**n my fifth birthday she took me to her secret place. At first glance, it was like any other abandoned barn—sunlight squeezing its way in between the shrunken boards that made up the walls, a tired roof yielding to the weight of time.

"Dottie...I don't get it. What's so special about this place? Dottie"

I found her there in the chute ten feet above me. She stood like an angel, motionless, staring out at the nothing as her delicate red curls floated about her, forming cocoon for her imagination to hide in. Though the sun fought hard to break through its brilliance, she, like a work of stained-glass, made it compromise, and the sunlight permeated the room as an Erie orange glow. With this vision, I saw the secret of the girl and of her temple. Her head turned lazily, and her eyes caught me standing there below.

"Come see," she called with a motion of her hand.

I quickly climbing my way up to join her. Still staring, she whispered words I couldn't make out and took my hand.

"This is my secret place," the words formed, "It's my favorite place in the world wide world."

"Is it magic?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied with a wide-eyed smile, "Anything can happen here. It's the place where dreams come from. That's why you gotta promise not to tell anybody about it."

A blood bond and a pinky swear later, we left the Dreamhouse and went home. That whole summer, we escaped to her secret place together and would try to catch our dreams before they came to us in sleep. It was at that old barn that she gave me my first kiss; coincidentally, it was also the place where she gave me my first black eye. The summer receded into fall and with the new season, we entered kindergarten.

Those first few months of school sent Dottie and I in different directions. While I was off with the boys battling for my reign as "King of the Mountain", she was with the rest of the girls haggling upside-down like monkeys from the jungle gym. When we were together, we hardly got out to the Dreamhouse at all, and when we did, it seemed that we could only find dreams we had already caught before. Nothing was new. Nothing was fresh. Winter blew in and I was miserable. Sleep stopped bringing dreams for me.

Somewhere in between Captain Kangaroo and my Big Wheel, I ended up at Jenny Cook's Valentine's Day party. For some reason Jenny Cook was staring at me, all the while wearing a smile that unnerved me. Her black tresses hung from her head like sleeping snakes. She was wearing an all white dress that stopped right above her knees and some cheap red lipstick she probably swiped from her mom's make-up drawer.

"Would you like to go to the gazebo in the backyard?," she asked.

"No," I replied with as polite a tone as I could muster.

"Pleeeeeeeeease," she whined (If there're one thing I can't stand it's whining).

"Fine! Fine! I'll go to the stupid gazebo," I said in submission.

The gazebo rested under an enormous weeping willow whose ancient branches stretched all the way across the yard. When we got there, she started babbling in womanspeak and once she realized that I had lost all interest in what she was saying, she kissed me. Not knowing what other choice I had, I kissed her back. I didn't notice the little red haired girl watching us from above, resting in the arms of the weeping willow.

The next day at school, Jenny's friends followed me around whispering and giggling. Come lunchtime, I ditched



them and went outside to eat the wretched portions of meatloaf that were shoved upon my plate by a pudgy fingered lunch aid. After poking at it two or three times, I heard another giggle. I turned to see who it was, but instead of seeing one of Jenny Cook's annoying cronies, I saw Dottie. She was sitting on the merry-go-round with a boy I knew from my homeroom. Upon noticing me, she dropped her smile, turned, and kissed the boy's cheek, shocking him more than me. Then she stood up, glaring at me the whole time, and walked back into the cafeteria.

Her back turned, she never saw me coming as I dumped the days worth of cafeteria throwaways over her head. Today would stand as the only day I was glad the school was serving us meatloaf.

Two days and one hell of a whipping later, there was a gentle knock on my bedroom door. I dragged my still sore rear out of bed and answered it. We stood staring at each other for what seemed like an hour, neither motioning or saying a word. She let out a tight breath of air to clear the tension, then she punched me in my gut, knocking me to the ground windless.

I stood up and faced her again.

Silence.

"I had a dream last night," I told her.

"So did I," She replied, her smile forming. "I wanna take you to my secret place," she proposed with a hint of anticipation.

I explained, "But I can't. I'm grounded."

Twenty minutes later, there we were, standing in the bail chute of the Dreamhouse. It was the most holy and magical place I could ever know in this world. We stayed for hours staring at the nothing and hanging from the cross beams. It was then that I once again noticed, wrapping her in a shroud of untouched beauty. Again, I saw the secret of the girl and of her temple.



*B&W Photograph by Nancy E. Anderson*

# Renaissance Man

by

Andrew Mayne Harter

The beige concrete overpass stood out over the park's tree line like a stranger at the dinner table. It wasn't necessarily an ugly monstrosity, it was just unsightly. For the revelers in the park below it, it played no part in their game of fantasy. There were no highway overpasses in the middle ages, then again there were no watches, no contact lenses, and especially no bright blue port-o-lets, some anachronisms were tolerated. Most of the participants seemed not to mind the twentieth century artifacts (both material and spoken) that seemed to infect the illusion of the medieval festival. To them it was just a game. But to some the anachronisms were like gnats flying in front of an object of beauty. To one they formed the bars of a jail.

His twentieth century name was unimportant. His medieval name was Myrdin. Myrdin the troubadour, sometimes the jongleur, sometimes poet, sometimes soothsayer, and occasionally thief. Myrdin's twentieth century counterpart had gotten himself into some serious trouble of the kind the twentieth century abounds with. Facing his problems

would probably result in more harm than good. He had resolved to himself that by the day's end that he would not return home to his overpriced undersized condo. Instead, through some method of magic or maybe madness, he would go to sleep tonight under the starry sky of the thirteenth century.

He did not decide this impulsively. Nor did he come upon the decision himself. Here and there one who is willing to listen will hear stories about people who get too caught up in the diversion. These people don't succumb to any psychosis or paranoid delusions. They simply become "lost". Never to

be seen in this time again. Some say that these people just grow tired of the grown up game and go home. But a few insist that something more cabalistic is at work. Fervent witnesses claim to have seen friends walk out of sight around tents or huts never to be gazed upon again by twentieth century eyes. Lost.

Myrdin wanted to be lost. His counterparts' woes left him with no fondness for the milieu in which he was born. All day long he walked around all manners of medieval constructions. Troubadour tents, merchant tables, food peddler booths, and even the stationary horse or two, all fell victim to Myrdin's intense pacing. He was trying to get lost.

As the day grew longer and the sun hung lower he became aware of the absurdity of the whole thing. He thought himself a fool for trying so literally to walk away from his problems. He came to the conclusion that if the thirteenth century did not want him then he would have to accept his twentieth century fate.

As the festival organizers hurried the last of the participants out of the park, Myrdin decided to take one last look at the park that failed to grant him salvation. As he rounded a chemical toilet to get a better look at the park something caught his eye. The great beige eyesore of an overpass began to fade. It faded away to reveal the reddish sky of dusk. The chemical toilet changed from bright blue plastic to dull grey wood. The voices of people telling others to leave began to fade. Myrdin shot a glance towards where once stood the skyline of a medium sized metropolis. Gone was the metropolis. In its place lay a small hamlet. Streams of smoke from night time fire places beckoned him closer. As he drew nearer to the small village he became aware of the sights, sounds, and smells of the medieval village. Myrdin smiled. Lost and found.

### The Snake

the mistakes mark her exterior  
regrets she carries are heavier than lead

she envies the snake who  
can slide out of her past  
and live in a fresh new skin

leaving the old one  
dead and scarred  
behind forever

- Larissa Pollica

### Down To The Gutter..

One cannot begin to list  
The rows of fear upon my shelf  
Intoxicating, loving  
Fakirs upon my shelf of nails  
A tin can chock full o nails,  
and rainwater, two or three small frogs  
and a lizard.

A tiny green scaled dragon,  
Red forked tongue upon my shelf  
My feet are throbbing from  
the rain, fine Italian leather  
tightens choking toes.  
Prunes in a row of five  
Aching dogs yelping to my spine.  
Peel off the shoes and socks  
and toss them,  
Dump the coffee can over  
Spill nails and amphibians  
everything alive scurries  
A safe place  
Stepping on the inanimate remains  
Bleed.

It flows, mixing with rainwater  
A little stream  
A winding Chinese river  
down to the gutter.

- Ophir Erez



*B&W Photograph by George Hockenberger*

## **Mourning Sunshine Breaker**

Upon your waning face  
your soul--the moon,  
shows depleting faith.

What is this meaning?  
Is it truth? But surely not  
clinganned to darkness  
creeping over light...  
perhaps though, if the  
moon were waxing, yes?

Well, why not?  
Its darkness is sticky  
like life in a wet paper  
bag, ready for lift-off,  
preparing time's breaker  
to extract the moon's night  
in the twist of a crescent  
mourning sunrise.

*- Daniel Todd Henderson*

## The Monster Who Dances At Night

### Kelly Knob

The trail winds,  
    climbs to the ridge line,  
Trees bareboned,  
    late winter,  
Rock cold in pale  
    sunlight,  
hawk circles overhead,  
    screeching whistle gets  
    no reply,  
cold damp earth,  
    spring hidden  
    deep inside,  
childhood memories,  
    like ghosts,  
    walk the mosaic  
    forest floor

- Laura Barrett

There's a trunk in the corner of the room  
which stays locked  
For a big scary monster lives in there,  
He likes the sound of well behaved children  
all others must BEWARE!

Yes, this monster who lives inside the trunk  
will eat you like an ice cream cone,  
He'll pop you into his great big mouth  
Then he'll spit out your bones.

He's purple in color with rough scaly skin,  
long horns extend from his head,  
He has round yellow eyes that glow in the dark  
and his teeth are all pointy and red.

His ears, on the side of his head, are HUGE,  
like Dumbo, though he can't fly.  
In comparison, his nose, is really quite small,  
His hair he parts on the side.

He has great big feet with only two toes  
and claws where his hands should be.  
His tail has humps, like a camel's back  
and he's as tall as a coconut tree.

This big scary monster, who eats the bad kids  
will come out of his trunk at night.  
To put on his tap shoes, grab his top hat and  
cane  
and dance when no one else is in sight.

When the children come back, they know he's  
been out,  
dancing and singing galore,  
For the children imagine his great big  
footprints  
scattered all over the floor.

- Sheila Halfacre

Dear Christo,

wrap the women's rights in pink  
lend them one land  
paint the white house, stripe it pink  
the fatherly ground won't stand  
wrap all the newborn babies in pink blankets  
make gender a neutral shade of pink  
dress the mafia in pink bow-ties  
but dip the ties in a steel glaze  
disinfect white hospital sheets  
with your plastic pink  
trade colours with the queen of spades  
and give her joker pink tights  
invite ronald reagan to watch his son  
perform the ballet of the pink flamingo  
send margaret thatcher a dozen pink roses  
and give her a pink plated ball point pen  
so she can send a thankyou note back to you  
and please, Christo, switch the sandman's  
bag of dust with a bag of pink crystal flakes  
so he can sprinkle specks of dreams-

Sincerely,

Pamela G. Greenside

## Nookleptia

Who is this in my head, who claims my thoughts for dead  
I am not one to reveal myself, this is not my intent  
Cast aside like an unloved toy, I linger in despair  
These thoughts I think are not of me, what Hell have I sent here?  
    Stolen thoughts in stolen mind... Is this a hoax or real?  
    Bifurcated from my kind... This is not me I feel  
    I can try to save myself, but I cannot go free  
    I can hear the Lord of Chaos closing in on me!

•  
Whose toy am I instead... Intent to make me dead  
I can't control this "menticide", this burning in my head  
I am not of my head, not me then who instead?  
This wrath on me's been brought, for someone stole my thoughts!  
    Perhaps I tried to delve into the reaches of myself  
    But I can't find this thief of mine, it could be no one else  
    Looking in through shattered glass of broken memories  
    Can he think what I just thought, no... NO, this cannot be!

•  
Who whispers in my bed, intent to steal my head  
Profusing sweet falls upon my brow, to slaughter I am led  
Cast aside like a Golliwog I fall to utmost fear  
Time like these are lost from me, my mind is yours my dear.  
    A fool, me play with mind  
    You steal me thoughts, too blind  
    Me cannot think, too hard to live  
    Me brain stuck on rewind...

- Drewcifer



*B&W Photograph by Tammy Ramos*

# There's No Such Thing As A Good Man

by

Dwayne T. Drayton

As soon as Al reached the front door, his senses were immediately provoked by his wife's presence - and all the tightness associated with his home returned as he put the key into the lock and began to open the door. He looked at his watch and remembered he probably reeked of alcohol and cigarette smoke. He checked his shirt for lipstick, damned himself, and threw his jacket over the infected area. His face looked as though a thousand lies were racing through his mind before the crack in the door was big enough to get his head through. He nervously wet his lips, not because of the aroma of a dinner that was kept warm for his benefit, but at the thought of fabricating a story that was convincing.

When Al entered the house he immediately saw her. He fought the impulse to shower her with the passion that never left him. Instead, he tried to make himself comfortable on the couch. He watched the gracefulness his wife displayed as she repeatedly moved from one side of the kitchen to the other. She was barefooted - and this excited him.

*He imagined her in the arms of that other man - then he forced the thought away.*

Her barefootedness made her long legs appear softer, more natural, qualities that pumps and high heels always hid. Her hair was pulled back into a ponytail, and her dark coco brown skin glistened slightly from the kitchen's warmth.

Three hours of excessive drinking took control and Al relaxed where he sat. He was suddenly awakened by the fever of Laura's presence standing directly in front of him - her hands were placed securely above the curve of her hips. He opened

his eyes slowly as if he were tired - not asleep. His jacket had fallen off his shoulder, exposing another woman's presence on his shirt. A thousand more lies purposely showed on his face.

"You shouldn't try to drive home when you've drinking," she said. Her wrinkled forehead gave Al the impression that she was not pleased - but her dimpled smile showed that she was. Her eyes focused on the shoulder of his shirt.

Al said nothing. He raised up one eyebrow and forked up the excess skin between his eyes.

As she sat down closely next to him, she asked, "out with the boys again?"

Al became blacker - and the room illuminated in association to his blackness. His top lip snarled as he jumped from where he sat. His shadow was like a depressed cloud consuming Laura's entire self. He told her, "What difference does it make to you?" There was a direct hatred to his voice. "I'm not like you - I'm not gonna fuck around and bring that shit home."

She covered her face with her hands and cried into them. And this only added to the disgust in Al's eyes. "I don't know what the hell you are crying for - shit - I should be the one crying."

"I would never have said anything," she sobbed, "if I'd known you'd treat me like this."

Treat you - Treat you - How do you expect me to treat you? - You're the one that lied - You're the one that was fuckin'



around on me - it doesn't matter if you told me or not, the fact is I know."

His face softened as he watched her cry. He looked at her with compassion. He took a deep breath and told her he was going to take a shower.

Dripping wet, he got out, reached for his toothbrush, paused, and took the mouthwash instead. He put on his robe without drying off and returned to his position on the couch. Laura had Marvin Gaye's *Let's Get It On* kickin' on the CD - this was their song - this was their song - he caught himself smile on the inside. Dinner was steaming on the dining room table.

Laura was again standing in front of him. "Come on - dinner's ready," she said.

He quickly reached up and snatched her by the wrist and wrestled her to the couch, holding her securely on his lap, sitting. His arms were locked around her waist denying her playful request for release. Her whimsical shrieks and screams turned into deep moans and sighs as he vehemently kissed her, and he felt the influence their hearts had on each other as they gently flowed to different rhythms - but it was different. He regretted starting this. He wanted to get it over with.

After a while Al pretended that the passion had left him without air - and reluctantly he came up from the depths of his longings. He forced a painful looking smile.

*That picture returned. Him - holding her. Caressing her. Whispering softly to her as he provided her with the pleasure that was supposed to be exclusively his right. Then they both suddenly looked at him and started to laugh uncontrollably, hysterically. He was standing naked before his wife and his wife's lover - straddling the line between love and hate. Then he turned on her. She was the joke now. Her lover forced her to take her place next to her joke of a man. And he, the lover, continued laughing alone - at the both of them.*

Al sunk deeper into the couch, letting his shoulders drop and loosening his fanciful grip on Laura's waist. He took a deep, deep breath as if he were trying to purify his insides.

"I gotta get outta here," he said to himself. Still wet from the shower, he hurried to clothe himself. He fumbled nervously while rushing to tie his Reeboks.

"Al?" She paused, looking at him Quizzically. "You not gonna eat?"

"When I get back," he said.

"How long will that be?"

He felt the rage rising to the top of his head. He squeezed his eyes tight for a second and said calmly, "I'll be back - when I get back."

Laura's eyes dropped to her feet. Al watched her. Her stance appeared vulnerable. Tenderly he placed his hands on her shoulders and waited until she looked at him. "I'll be back," he said, "Okay?"

"Your hair is still wet." She frantically ran to the bathroom and came back with one of the thicker towels. "Let me dry you off," she said reaching for him.

Al's reach doubled hers, keeping her from getting close to him. "Laura, has your friend ever been here?"

Her eyes closed, she slightly trembled. "Once," she answered.

He left.

When Al set foot into the darkness of the Purple Onion, the sudden loss of the late evening sun temporarily blinded him - the smell of sweaty flesh and stale beer gave him what he thought was an electric shock. And he just stood at the door mesmerized at the sight of the woman on stage - dancing as if she was begging to be sexed. As he moved over to the stage, he churched up a dollar and *slowly* inserted it into her garter - it was more than half way up her thigh - already tightly

fanned with bills. She licked her lips and gave Al a voluptuous smile in place of a thank you. Then she moved on to entice others to reduce their banks on her.

A sea of bills was waving in the air. Sir Mix-a-Lot was on the box with *Baby Got Back* she started grinding seductively in the air while quaking her liberal ass to the rhythm. Shabba Ranks came on next and she removed her top - the crowd was showing more excitement. The bikini bottom came off with En Vogue's, *Never Gonna Get It* - the crowd went berserk. A brass pole was in the middle of the stage. With nothing on but too much make-up, she jumped up as high as she could, gripping the pole at her peak - she flipped her legs over her head and slowly coiled down, head first, like a dangerous viper. When she reached the floor, she was lying on her side with one leg up in the air like an open scissor.

Somebody in the crowd yelled, "That girl's got an ass like a microwave."

Above the laughter, a different voice screamed, "Yeah, she can heat me up from the inside out."

Al scoffed at their commonness. He ordered a Tangaray and tonic and opened up a tab. He stacked up four fifties on the table so that the amount was clear and set his drink on top of them. He looked to his left and noticed that all the chairs were lined up against the wall - he looked to the right and noticed that he was sitting in the middle of the room. He looked at his drink and noticed fingerprints on the inside of the glass.

Al watched the dancer after she came off stage - she was soliciting contributions for her dance from those who hadn't given her anything while she was dancing. She was thoroughly working the room topless. A dancer Al hadn't noticed before sat next to him - she put her arm around his neck and automatically began to play with his ear.

"Wuz up?" she said.

Al violently snatched his head away from her hand and

drained his drink. "You what's up," he told her. His eyes systematically focused on the thickness of her calves and slowly moved up the path of her body, stopping briefly at the top of her thighs, then they moved up to her solid, proud, breast. He comically puckered up his lips then exhaled hard. The make-up on her face was uneven and clashed with the darkness of her dark brown skin. Al saw innocence in her eyes even through the green contacts. He also saw the experience of a hustler in the fullness of her lips. Her weave was loose and her nails were much too long, brightly colored the same shade of red as her lips.

"Naw - You what's up," she said trying to regain the offense. "Let me give you a table dance?" Her Brooklyn accent was seductively course.

"Damn I just got here." He paused for a second, looked at her, and said, "Maybe later."

"Buy me a drink then," she demanded

He ignored her request. "Could you tell that girl over there to come here," he asked, pointing to the one he had seen on stage when he first came in. N.W.A. was on the box now, *A Hundred Miles and Running*.

Her smile went dry - she sliced him with her eyes before she cut them in the direction which he was pointing. "Whoo?" She sounded like an owl who couldn't let go of the "OO".

"The tall one over there," he said, "over there by the poker machine in that black g-string."

She sucked her teeth hard before she said, "What you wanna talk to hur fo?"

Al slid a single duckie in her garter and signaled the bartender to give her a drink - on him.

He watched her flirt with every man she passed as she moved over to the poker machine. He watched her say something in the ear of the dancer he wanted - they both looked at him - only one of them smiled at him.

She waited a few minutes before she came over - she stood directly in front of him. She gave him a sample nasty pelvic thrust grind type dance to the music of Jodeci. "You wanna table dance" she asked.

"Later."

He was sitting off to the side of the table, so she had to squeeze by him to take the seat next to his. She looked over her shoulder - watching him watch her pass. She wiggled herself comfortable in her seat while moving as close to him as possible. They just stared at each other for a couple seconds. She moistened her lips before she asked what was up.

"You what's up." His automatic response made him smile to himself. He saw her glance at the bills on the table.

"Buy me a drink."

"You can't wait for me to offer." He surrendered both hands in the air before he told her to go ahead. She hollered to the bartender to bring her a Black Russian. The bartender looked at him. He pointed to his empty glass and nodded his head yes. "You always dress like this in public?" he asked her. She sucked her teeth extra hard and rolled her eyes to the top of her head.

"What's your name?" she asked.

"Al."

"I'm Diamond - It's nice to meet you Al." They shook fingers.

A different bartender brought over the drinks. "Twelve-fifty" he said. "I got it on your tab."

"So your name's Diamond as in diamonds and pearls?"

"It's my stage name."

"What you need a stage name for?"

"For guys like you."

They kind of chuckled at each other.

"You married, ain't you?"

Al looked at his wedding band - the lack of light made

it appear slightly tarnished.

"Right now my wife wants to be married - I'm not so sure."

She sucked her teeth hard again. "Oh - it's like dat, huh?"

"Like what?" he asked.

"You only married when you wanna be?" She moved her face closer to his.

He shifted his chair a little putting a small distance between them. "No - It's not like that," he said.

For a moment he thought of the reason he was there. He wished his being there would hurt her. He still loved her - but he wanted to hurt her.

He downed his drink and signaled the bartender for two more - plus another for Diamond. He downed one before the bartender placed the second on the table. Diamond looked at him and shook her head - in pity.

"It's that bad?"

"What?"

"Why you tryin' to get drunk?"

"I'm not trying to get drunk - I'm gonna get drunk."

"What you wanna do that fo?"

"Guilt taught me a good lesson - but it didn't give me any answers."

"Huh?"

"When I was in the fifth grade there was a girl who used to mess with me. She was kind of a big for a girl, but she was cute from what I remember - anyway, she used to hit me every time she saw me. My mamma told me she did it because she liked me. My daddy told me not to hit her back and to never hit girls, 'never, under no circumstances'. One day I told her, in front of her friends, if she didn't stop hitting me I wouldn't like her back. Needless-to-say she got pissed. She told everybody that she was going to beat me up after school.

When that time came she taunted me for what seemed like hours. And I remember I was about to cry because I did not want to be a bad person by fighting her, but at the same time I wanted to kill her. I remember all these kids laughing and making fun of me as she humiliated me. I guess when she realized that I wasn't going to fight back is when she decided to give me that left hook to my eye. She almost knocked me out. Then she started kickin' my books into the street and kicking dirt in my face. My eye was 'bout the size of a baseball. I got up and kicked her ass all the way home. When I think about it I should have just let her beat me, because the guilt was worse than the ass whippin' I got from my dad - but I learned. The funny thing about it is when I think about that day I can't visualize what she did to me - just what I did to her."

"What's this gotta do wid you wife or sumthin?" Diamond asked.

"*Is what I'm doing to her just as bad as what she did to us?*" Al was thinking to himself. "*There was no threat of her getting caught - yet she told me. She didn't have to tell me. But she carried on with this guy for a month.*" He offered another drink. "*Can you correct dishonesty with honesty?*" A dancer came around for a tip - he handed her a dollar. "*What's worse, the mistake that lasts for a minute or one that lasts a month? I know she still loves me - but I don't know if I can live with her mistake. I don't see how she could do this to us.*"

Diamond held her hand in front of his nose and snapped her fingers hard, "The little pain you deal with growing up is nothing compared to the shit you have to deal with when you're grown, is it Al?"

Al had a painful I know look on his face. "*Damn.*"

He gave Diamond fifty. She got up to dance for him. "I'm not interested in you dancing for me anymore," he told her. "Here." He pushed the other three fifties toward her and

told her thanks. He got up and signed his tab. He heard her call out for him to wait as he walked towards the door. He didn't say anything. He didn't turn around - he just walked out. The sun was settled and the night had a fresh smell to it. He was halfway to his car when he heard a scream come from behind him. He turned and saw Diamond in a long red sweater, struggling to pull away from the bouncer. The bouncer hit her with a closed fist in the back of her head. Her body went limp - he was dragging her back inside. Al didn't even notice that he probably outweighed him by seventy or eighty pounds as he raced back towards the entrance of the Purple Onion.

They were halfway through the door when Al closed it hard on them preventing them from entering any farther. "What's your problem Man?" Al asked. The bouncer's grin was nasty. One of his front teeth was half rotten, the other was capped with white gold.

"Hey man dese womens kain't go ho around wid no customers whens day 'pose ta be workin."

"Let her go," Al said "she wasn't comin' with me."

"Looky here yous liddle scrub, ifin I put dis bitch down I'ma gonna break both my feet off in your ass."

"Look man, she's not a bitch or a ho, she's just hurt, let me help her." There was no pleading in Al's voice.

The bouncer placed Diamond down gently and came up with a fist covered in rings. He caught Al in the eye, the same eye. The force knocked Al into a parked car. The bouncer was moving toward him like a hungry bear. He just started pounding away at the meat above Al's shoulders. And Al just took the beating. Laura's image flashed into his mind. It was a good image. Every shot Al took reminded him of a mistake he had made, that he regretted, that he'd wish he could change. Diamond was just looking on as if she were watching something normal. The bouncer finished pounding Al and was walking back towards Diamond.

"Don't touch her," he screamed.

The bouncer pushed Diamond through the door - out of sight. There was no grin on his face this time, as he came back towards Al. "You suck ass horny niggers don't know when ta shut-da fuck-up," he yelled.

Al and the bouncer were face to chest, when he grabbed Al by the neck with one hand. Al raised his foot and brought all his weight down on the instep of the bouncer's foot. The cracking bones sounded like firecrackers, and the bouncer's grip automatically loosened. He went to the ground.

Al chose not to avenge his beating when he saw Diamond standing in the threshold of the Purple Onion. She held out her hand toward him. And Al saw the glimmer of his wedding ring. He looked at his naked left hand. "How did you get that?" he asked reaching to retrieve it.

"While you and yo liquor was havin' a conversation, you took it off and left it on the table."

"I did? I must've been really zuited." He put his ring back on without even thinking about it. Still looking at her he told her thank you, and began to walk away. He paused to look at the bouncer struggling to get up. He looked back to see Diamond still looking at him. "I have no right to judge anybody except myself," he said. "We all make mistakes. Don't we Diamond?"

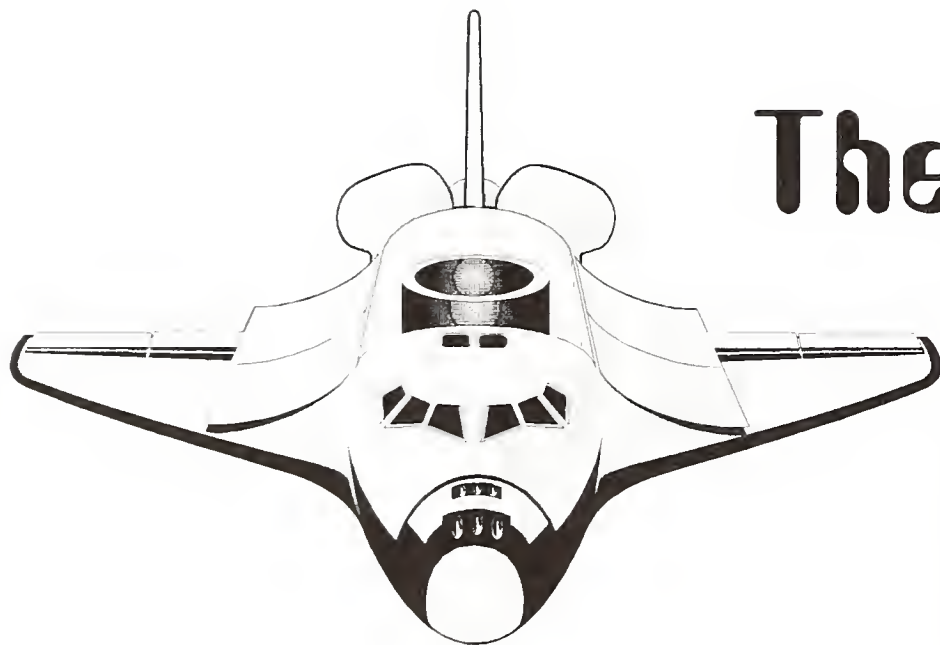
Diamond looked at the bouncer, then looked at Al. She looked at the bouncer again and looked at Al again. "WAIT," she screamed at him. She ran back inside of the Purple Onion, and before the door could close behind her she was back with her purse. "Could you take me home, Al?"

"Sure, but understand this - I'm going home to my wife."

She smiled at him. "Good."



"Jen" B&W Photograph by Christine Simpson



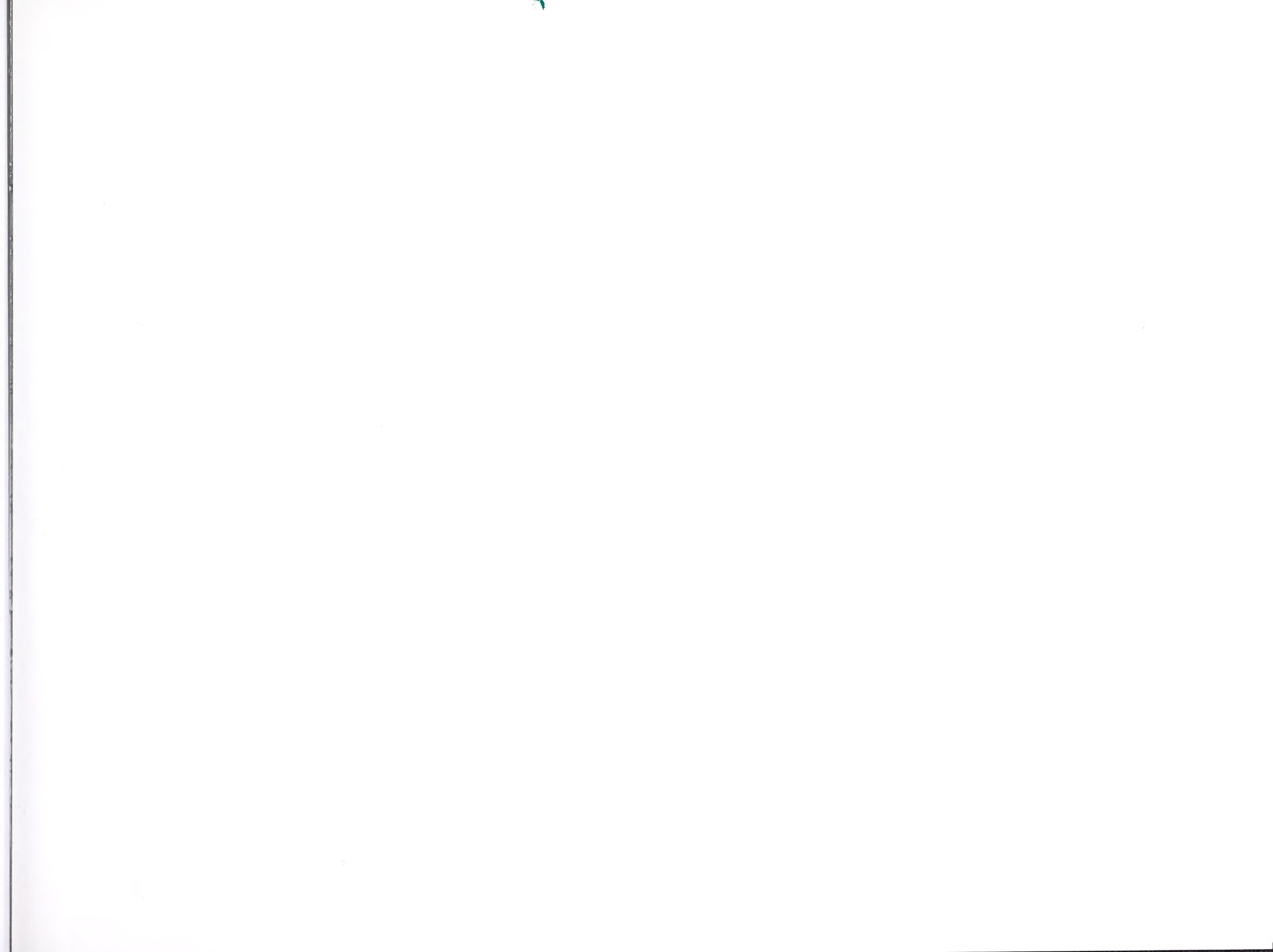
# P'an Ku

## The Next Generation

Even Captain Kirk eventually had to retire (or, he will sometime in the future). The helm of *P'an Ku* will be passed on to someone new for next year. I want to thank Mark Jetté for his serving as the editor for the past two years. The magazine would not have happened without his dedication and leadership. It would also not have achieved the level of excellence that it has without him. He is leaving a grand but difficult legacy to follow for the next editor. To do better than he has done, the next editor will have to "boldly go where no one has gone before." This will not be easy. Just ask Jean Luc. Well done, Mark!

### **Are you ready to accept the P'an Ku challenge?**

Next year will be as exciting for *P'an Ku* as this past year was. I'd like you to be part of it. Unless you're one of those people who read magazines from the back forward like my mother and Betty Owen do (if you are, I hope you enjoy this issue), you're reading this now thinking: "I could do that"; "I'd like to do that"; "How did they do that?"; "Why did they do that?"; or, "I wonder if I can do that?" Why not answer the question for yourself? I will be looking for new staff members for next year: editors (in chief, art, poetry, fiction), an art director, design staff, and anyone else that would like to be involved. You don't need any experience for most of these positions. You do need dedication and enthusiasm. Some scholarships are available for those who really want to work hard at this. The mission of *P'an Ku* as I see it is to showcase and encourage the creative efforts, both literary and artistic, of the students of Broward Community College. We have many talented students here who need and deserve our support. I would like to assemble a group of students this summer to begin preparation for the coming year. You could do this for credit if necessary. We will meet in the summer to learn about and discuss desktop publishing, design, editing, and selection techniques. If this sounds like something you'd find interesting, or if you want to know more about this, please call me, Patrick Ellingham, advisor, at 963-8858. It doesn't matter what campus you are on or whether you attend school day or night. I look forward to meeting and working with you.



# P'AN KU



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