

ARCHIVES  
PS  
501  
.P35  
2001-2002  
v.33  
no. 1&2  
c.3

BROWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE LIBRARY



3 3301 01172227 2









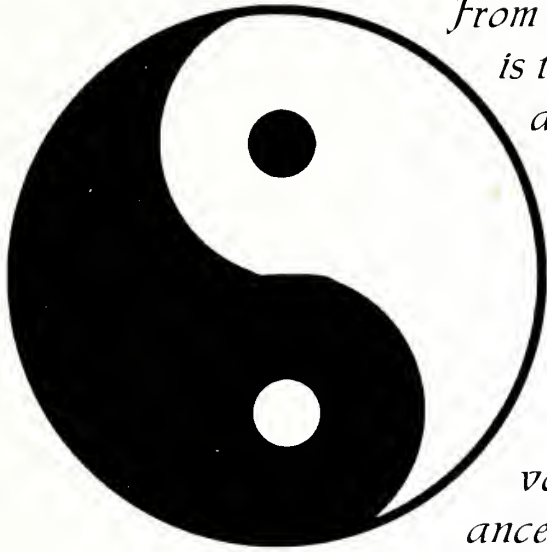




*P'an Ku*







*From P'an Ku we derive Yin and Yang. He is the primeval man born from the egg. One day the egg split open and the top half became the sky and the bottom half the Earth. After 18,000 years, P'an Ku died and split into a number of parts. His head formed Sun and Moon. His Blood the rivers and seas. His hair the forests, sweat the rain, breath the wind, and voice the thunder. His fleas became the ancestors of mankind.*

*Music, feelings of happiness, mythology, faces worn by time, certain twilights and certain places, want to tell us something, or they told us something that we should not have missed, or they are about to tell us something; this imminence of a revelation that is not produced is, perhaps, the esthetic event.*

*- Jorge Luis Borges*

*P'an Ku*, Volume thirty-three, number one, was printed by Ormont Graphics. *P'an Ku* is designed, produced, and edited solely by students at Broward Community College. All contributions in this issue are by students at BCC. This magazine is funded by the Student Activities Board. The opinions expressed are those of our contributors and do not necessarily represent those of the editors, faculty, staff, administrators or trustees of the college. Typed contributions with the name, social security number, and telephone number are welcomed from all students attending BCC. Copyright 2001 by Broward Community College, 225 East Las Olas Boulevard, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33301. All communications with the editors and all inquiries concerning this publication should be addressed to: Editor of *P'an Ku*, BCC South Campus, 7200 Pines Boulevard, Pembroke Pines, Florida 33024. Telephone: (954)986-8044. All copyrights revert back to the original artists and authors after publication. Visit *P'an Ku's* website: <http://www.broward.cc.fl.us/locations/south/slife/panku/index.jsp>



Cover by Sandra M. Urquhart  
Illustrations by Brandy Sejeck  
and Rebekah D. Fowler

### Poetry

- 4 *How She Kisses You* Korama Jali Forbes  
8 *Veo venir tus ojos* Alexis Vega  
10 *Ode to the Butterfly King* Regan Chapman  
14 *Nightmares* Alexis Cohen  
17 *#4* Adam Day  
26 *The Fever* The P'an Ku Zoo  
28 *Alcoholic Bob* Napoleon Kernessant  
29 *The Factor* Sandra M. Urquhart  
30 *Papa's Magic Hands* Zenaida Smith  
33 *A los amantes* Alexis Vega  
34 *Blanca (White Girl)* Juan Griego  
36 *Some Strange Fire...* Anastasia Kline  
39 *I Don't Watch the News* Sean Sanchez  
40 *King Night's Feast* Frances Weinstock  
48 *Sugarcane* Alexis Cohen  
54 *Scraping shadows* Grant Russell Clyman  
55 *Measuring Longing* Brandy Sejeck  
57 *Pssssssssss* Paris LaRue  
59 *Stale Bread* Grant Russell Clyman  
61 *From Right to Left* Daniel W. Butler  
62 *Jack and Jill* Michelle Becker

## Prose

- 6 *My Time at Interact* Jaime Roncanio  
18 *Blood Drive* Jonah Maddox  
42 *Perceptual Strife* Michelle Becker  
50 *My Perfect Man* Annete Parker

## Artwork

- 5 *Hope* Rebekah D. Fowler  
9 *Blooming* Kelly Martin  
12 *Fiddler* Helen Daniels  
13 *Pride and Joy* Laura Parker  
15 *Guardian of Dark Water* Doug Graham  
16 *Tomorrow's Yesterday* David Brown  
27 *Flower* Ray Ward  
35 *Yin-Yang Dancer* Erin K. Hanna  
38 *Untitled* Cristine Asleij  
41 *Tree of Darkness* Michael Rodriguez  
47 *Native* Ray Ward  
49 *Man from Timor* Mike Owens  
53 *Day-Night* Adela Szymanski  
56 *Pixie Trip* Erin K. Hanna  
60 *Untitled* Lindsay Philbert  
63 *Pocahontas* Jennifer Duncan

## Photography

- 17 *Rock Star* Linda Dankovich  
32 *Breakfast at the Biltmore* Franka Meadows  
37 *In the Spirit of My Ancestors* Erika L. Watson  
52 *Adventurous Beginnings* Lisa Mohamed-Lowe  
58 *Bonaventure Cemetery* Erika L. Watson

## How She Kisses You

by Karama Jali Forbes

*She brings both hands to either side of your face,  
then slowly  
slides her hands to the back of your head.*

*She hooks you with liquid eyes  
and you finally understand the meaning of  
intoxication.  
Instinctively, you step closer.*

*You feel you could swim in those shimmery eyes,  
like agile seal chasing sardines.  
You watch her face come nearer  
until your eyes cross.*

*She plants full, moist lips squarely on yours.  
You stand there – a stark lightening rod  
attracting the elements.  
You do not notice her lips part,  
only that darting tongue as it slides  
down your throat,  
kneading, exploring, seeming to tickle your gonads.*

*This charming, snake-like creature  
with her two hands at the back of your head,  
who has given new meaning to a deep kiss  
pulls you tighter, into and through her.*

*Your teeth clink like celebration glasses.  
She mashes your lips, draws blood,  
drinks from your cup of elation.*

*She searches your mouth as though it were your soul  
and having not found what she desires there  
releases you to caress another.*



**Hope** Charcoal by Rebekah D. Fowler

## ***My Time at Interact***

by Jaime Roncanio

My parents always told me over and over to do something productive when I wasn't in school. I guess they didn't value me sitting home on Saturday afternoons watching wrestling. They always persuaded me to do some kind of community service to help out in some shape or form. Eventually, it got annoying, so I always brushed them off with some monotonous excuse. I just never saw myself getting up early, especially on a Saturday, to do work I wasn't getting paid for. I realize now, it was just laziness on my part.

One morning in school, I noticed a big announcement on the bulletin board for

sign-up sheet with a bunch of names already on it. I'm not sure what came over me at that exact moment. Maybe it was the repeated persuasion of my parents and friends that finally got to me. Or maybe it was just the quick and spontaneous drive to give it a shot. Either way, I left school that day with my name written on the volunteer sign-up sheet.

To the delight of my parents, I wasn't going to sit home wasting away on Saturdays anymore. When I first joined, my views of participating in the assignments were with a bit of indifference. Frankly, I just went 'with the flow' so I wouldn't have to endure the annoying urges from my parents about doing something with myself. Throughout that year, my assigned job was

*When I arrived I was taken aback on seeing how many deprived kids and adults there were.*

'The Interact Club'. It was the school community service group. For a second, I remembered what my parents said about joining a club. *Volunteering isn't my thing* I thought to myself. So I walked off, not giving it a second notion until a friend of mine brought it up later in the day. He had already signed up and asked if I planned on joining it too. Without giving it much judgment, I didn't really consider it and ignored his urging of signing up as well. When the school day concluded, I passed by the same big announcement again as I walked toward the bus. On the spur of the moment, I all of a sudden decided to head toward the Interact Club sign, which had a

to mainly help clean up the school cafeteria on weekends. I grew not enjoy it, naturally, but I felt it was a necessity to give back and get paid, even though I wasn't having the time of my life.

It was a cold Saturday morning in November and I was up to do my usual scrubbing and washing. That one day instead I was told to deliver an old coat to the local homeless shelter because there was a great need for winter clothes. This wasn't going to be a big deal I thought. Just another dull and regular assignment I had to do to fulfill my duties in Interact.

When I arrived, I was taken aback on seeing how many deprived kids and

adults there were. A lot of them there were getting the last of winter clothes from fellow volunteers that were giving them out. Soon thereafter, I noticed that, unfortunately, there wasn't enough winter clothing for everyone anymore, so many had to be turned away.

That was when a small boy approached me, possibly hoping I would spare anything I had. I gave him the coat without hesitation. He grabbed it and then looked up at me with his teary eyes and smiled. He didn't have to say thank you because that smile alone said it all for me. I never forgot it from that day on. I thought that if I had been at home and not volunteering my services, this boy would have never had the coat I gave him to keep warm. That made me feel happy and special because I knew that I changed someone's day just by being generous. I felt like a winner. I gave something that the boy needed and it was a great experience, overall.

I never knew volunteering by taking part in The Interact Club would help me see things in a whole new light. It did. That year, I found out how great it felt to give back to a community and lend a helping hand to those in need. I came to understand that even if it's little things, like helping clean up the school cafeteria or assisting someone in anything, whatever you do to help, it's worth it because in the end, the outcome is always positive.

Veó venir tus ojos

by Alexis Vega

-a Ileana García

*Veó venir tus ojos.*

*Un par de cisnes blancos  
rebasen al índice místico de la tierra  
y sus hechizos.*

*En ellos la sapiencia elocuente del abuelo.  
En ellos la chispa suficiente para un niño.*

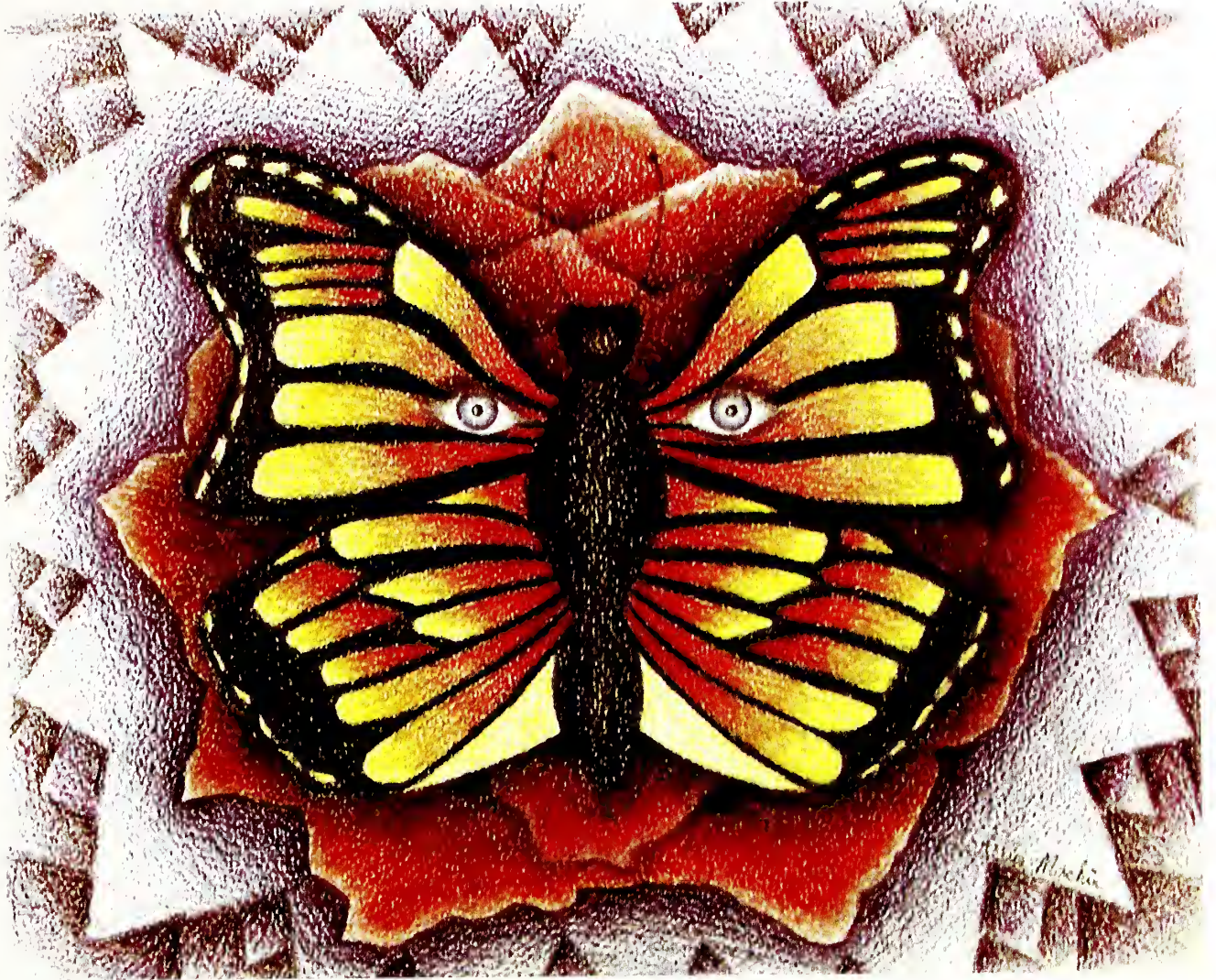
*Veó venir tus ojos.*

*Dos luciérnagas se conducen pasajeras  
por los montes en espiral y ventisca  
como un parto de átomos encendidos.*

*Por ellos nace el sol día tras día.  
Por ellos vivo como un verso fugitivo.*

*Veno venir tus ojos.*





**Blooming** PrismaColor by Kelly Machin

## Ode to the Butterfly King

by Regan Chapman

*I walked into your room  
Home-made curtains staining the sunlight  
rainbows of colors  
emanating from the window  
patterns of tinted light  
dancing on the floor  
tie-dyed tapestries swaying in the breeze  
their shadows fluttering about the room  
so delicate*

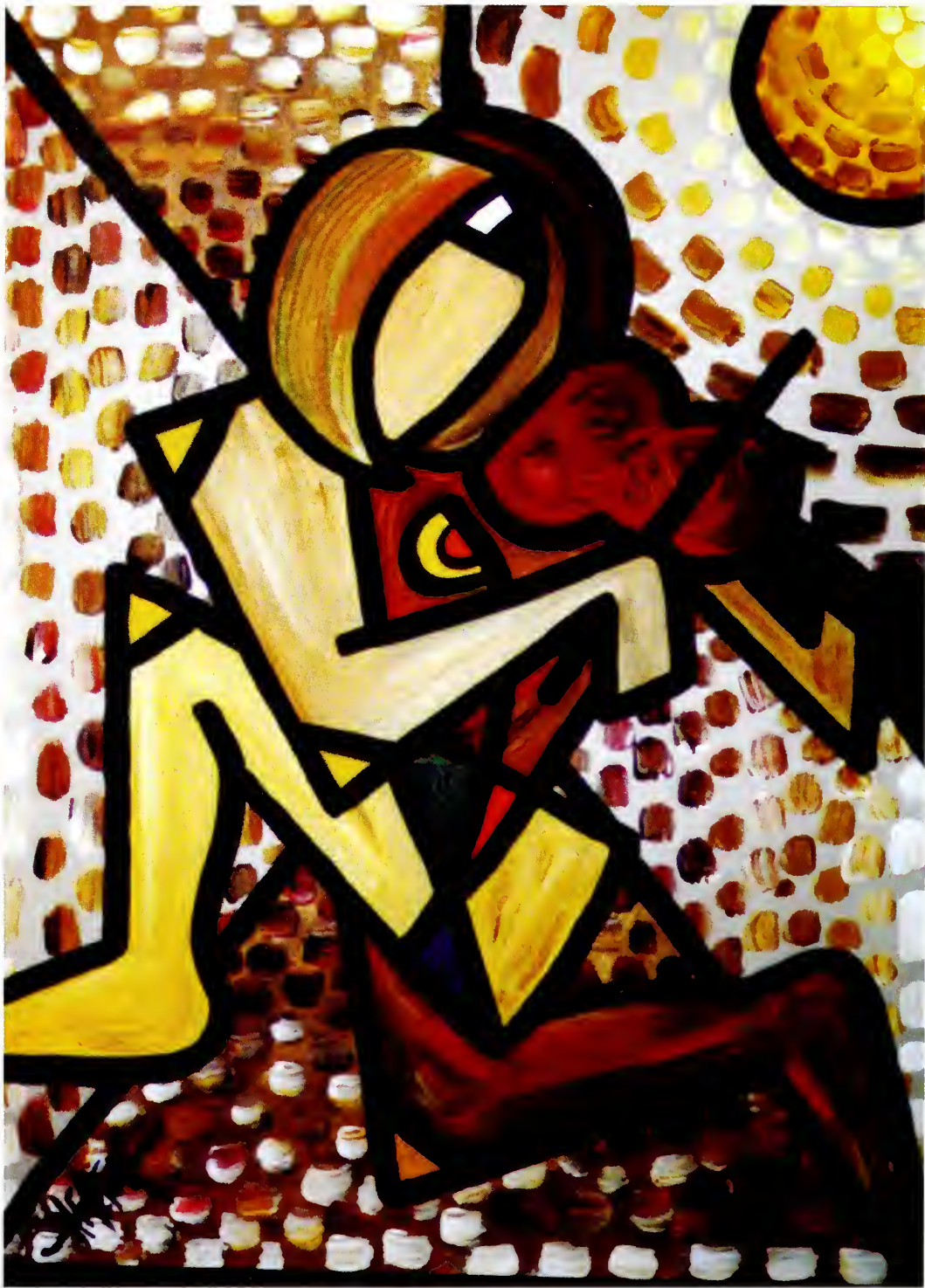
*little blue post-its  
one stuck on the light switch  
"I am thinking of you"  
I found one on the stereo  
"Everything I hear makes me miss you"  
Little blue forget-me-nots  
You are such a good little girl  
Leaving him little pieces of your love  
to ease  
your absence*

*he took me into your room  
with my heart singing to him  
my love cutting my virtues to ribbons  
he led me into your dancing butterflies  
made me swim in your patchwork colors  
and there, on the threads of your sheets  
he serenaded me  
And I am dancing too  
in the soft caresses of his melodies*

*after  
he gathers your post-its  
stuffs them in your dresser  
he showers  
I gather myself  
tainted in the light  
your butterflies  
across my soft naked skin*

*You  
your trust  
unknowingly yielding to  
    a cruel predator  
he's preying upon your sweetness  
    he's consuming my very honey  
he's deceiving you  
    he's devouring me*

*we are sisters  
our love identical  
the same dances in our bones  
same colors shining from our souls  
and I betrayed you  
I couldn't help but love you  
I couldn't help but violate you  
I broke into you  
    ripped through your chest, your lungs  
    stole your flesh, took your breath  
I laid them down on our bed  
I assaulted you  
and you never even knew that I existed*



Fiddler Acrylic on Canvas by Helen Daniels



Pride and Joy Collage by Laura Parker

## Nightmares

by Alexis Cohen

*My crooked shoulder hangs low with your weight.  
Those nights I saw you crawl precariously through the dark.  
The last drops of vodka like acid soddered  
your tongue to greet my arrival.*

*You thought you were abusing just yourself.  
I would wake up to hear you  
in the bathroom crying, vomiting, crying  
as I'd turn the volume up on  
the Late Show left on the television.  
You'd stumble by where I laid and hoped you  
wouldn't stop to talk. You wouldn't.  
Our eyes would meet- my disappointment  
Cutting like machetes, like cutting through  
a jungle the way they clouded over.  
In your bed you'd moan, talking to yourself  
or the demons that invaded your head.  
Half-sleeping next to the bottle hidden by your  
Covers so I would never see it, you lay  
passed out, arms spread, legs  
wide like making snow angels.  
I always saw death clinging to the ceiling.  
Your face danced with each drink, contorted as if  
pulled by strings—a puppet held by your own pain.  
At night I'd try to pour it down the sink, to cover up  
the holes in the carpet from your dropped bent cigarettes.  
At night I'd tell myself it's not my problem.*



Guardian of Dark Water Painting by Doug Graham



Tomorrow's Yesterday    Digital Art by David Brown



# 4

by Adam Day

*I am not so preoccupied with what I have  
To neglect the possibility of what I can give,  
To turn around all the epics lost and fallen.  
Am I digging too deep or are you telling me not to cross the line?  
These questions have appeared as faint shadows wafting through the forest  
Singing the song of change.  
I enter the broken temple and sit on its familiar throne  
Glaring down at all the heroes before me.  
The ground around me is fading quickly and I cannot tell if I am  
Falling or Flying.  
I can feel something deep inside me  
    Gripping me  
Telling me not to fear for I am all that I must be  
The bounds of the self have been stretched to the edge of sanity and I feel  
Relief.*



**Rock Star** B&W Photograph by Linda Dankovich

## **Blood Drive**

by Jonah Maddox

(broop-broop-broop-broop-broop)

*Far away, ringing, telephone call after midnight. Chanting on and on in perilous battle, not able to be swayed from its purpose. Ring once, twice, thrice, frice, what the fuck is frice?*

(broop-broop-broop)

*No, not the telephone. Alarm, wee hours of the morning are at hand, wake up you stupid shit!*

Gerard opened his eyes to obscurity; it cornered him against his pillow. Quickly he disengaged the alarm clock. When he had bought the thing Gerard found the siren irritating. Since he needed it to wake earlier what noise could disturb peaceful slumber more efficiently than one you feel is consistently bothersome? A dog barked five stories down and six blocks away, he new by the tone that it was Burrows, Redmond LeFurge and his furry four-legged companion usually bumped into him during lunch.

Morning would become from night shortly, as the sun was set to rise the way it had countless mornings before. And, if he could find strength to lift himself out of bed, his specified schedule would repeat. Boyd was bound to be on his ass should he arrive two hours late like three days of the past week. Held stumble into Gerard's office, his belly performing the wave by itself, voicing threats predicting long waits in unemployment lines for probable rejection. "Damn't Gerry," the gloriously obese programmer would state, "I can't be having this. I'm trying to run a business. Why? To make money. This being late crap doesn't work towards productivity. Sooner or later I'll have had all I can take, it's shape up or ship out Gerr, your call."

That was all bullshit though; Gerard Baratta was the best programming wizard Boyd's backward ass company Eagle Pride had to offer. Nothing could change that, or make Boyd eject him. He stretched getting onto his feet, feeling disoriented about what time he needed to be at work Gerard walked across his cruddy carpet singed with cigarettes and stained with scotch. The bathroom

sink is where he headed, splashing cool water onto his face usually stimulated the awareness in his mind. Goosebumps broke the smoothness that was his skin, he felt mildly nauseous but saw no reason for it to make him late. He'd be on time today, with a paper, and coffee, and a sweet tasting go gargle with some horse manure defiant grin for Boyd Nayer. The obnoxious alarm clock said it was 6:15 a.m.; this gave him forty five minutes to shower and commute. The clouds outside his window were visible now, clearer, they brought no mention of the approaching nightmares.

I

"Sir, excuse me, would you be interested in giving blood today?"

The fat man walked on, without regard or reply, obviously ignoring her. He kept going till he reached the door to a company called Eagle Pride, Nancy knew that from the sign. The fat man pulled out his keys, used one to unlock the door, then went inside. Fate would choose Nancy's first potential donor for today to be an overweight desk jockey jerk.

She was used to the treatment, to people carelessly marching past her. Most were afraid that the needles would hurt; truthfully it wasn't as bad as made out to be. She was even currently offering free t-shirts for anyone who gave blood, free t-shirts! Nancy couldn't grasp why nobody wanted something free in return for a little blood. From a corner across the street she saw Vic returning with four cups of coffee. He went to the bus and motioned for her to come inside. Since there weren't any people that looked like they wanted to donate, she decided some coffee might boost her spirits.

The inside of the bus was cramped; she hadn't thought about it before but bringing that fat guy in would've been a bitch. Equipment would have gotten knocked over, his sweaty body would be bumping her the whole time.

"Delicious," Vic said, "remind me to go there again if we come back to this spot."

They all nodded, Serena raised her cup instead. The bus had two rooms in the back where Harper would ask donors questions. In front of

the doors was an aisle with four beds altogether, two on each side. They stood like this, Nancy in front of the main entrance, Vic closer to the exit, Serena behind the wheel, and Harper in his interrogation room. The four were enjoying their morning kick starts, only Nancy heard the footsteps ascending the stairs behind her. She turned and was met by a ghastly face. It smiled, cold uncaring eyes burning through her. She didn't see the hand rise up or feel it connect with her jaw, she slammed onto the floor without knowing what was going on. All she saw were the eyes, those horrible dark eyes looking into her.

Vic yelled her name and ran towards the intruder, Harper did the same, Serena sat dumbfounded in her seat. The stranger stepped inside revealing the two companions with him. One grabbed Harper in a headlock, snapping his neck with simple applied force. Vic put up more of a fight, but they were too strong, they kicked him for a while after he had fallen. When the three killers moved away, Nancy could see clearly that Vic was dead, his lips were eternally twisted in pain. They looked normal now, with her mind understanding she could see that only their eyes wore evil. If she had seen them from far away she would've asked them how badly they wanted a free t-shirt. She wouldn't have known they were monsters.

"Oh, God, I don't want to die!" Serena screaming, that was the only coherent thing she said before one of them, Nancy couldn't tell which, broke her neck as well. She closed her eyes, Nancy didn't want to see anymore. But she heard them talk, arguing about who had the best kill. One said, "I don't think that one's dead."

An answer came, it made Nancy start shivering, the voice belonged to the original attacker, "Well my friends, there is only a single way to find out." She opened her eyes and he was advancing on her, at his sides were a younger male and a younger female version of him. Nancy lost consciousness as they beat her, tasting rust that was actually her blood, discerning death but already gone when it came.

## II

An hour later, Redmond LeFurge was making his way to Eagle Pride, hoping to see Gerard. Burrows trailed him by a few steps, no more than that. The two had been together for over a decade, the dog would stay at the side of his man till death do they part. His loyalty was born from instinct, and neither the winter blizzards or numerous sudden downpours would alter his faithfulness. Redmond, as well, felt the same as Burrows; the pair were inseparable in a way most minds cannot catch. Their bond was from the need of one for the other, there wasn't a master. So the dog remained nimbly trotting, pausing sometimes to examine the interesting everything, the boundless chances the black Labrador sensed. When THE BAD THING crossed Burrow's nose his back hair stood on end, a low growl rumbled deep inside his canine throat.

Redmond didn't hear his old friend's disapproval to a rotten fragrance in the air, he was busy trying to decipher how he should confront Gerard. What way could there be to ask a man you hardly know, who occasionally passes words with you in the park during his lunch break, if there is a job for a fifty six year old retired citizen at his business? No way, he figured, not without making an ass of yourself. He didn't believe Gerard would understand, that was his main concern. For his entire life he had worked like a bastard, raising no family and marrying no wife, he proposed to employment instead. Highways all over America supported him. They showed that through their painted lines, placing those lines on new streets had been Redmond's career. And when he drove over any one, he always recognized it, and remembered what his thoughts had been when imprinting it on the road. This had continued until his hands began to shake by intervals, and twisted marks became frequent visitors in his work. The man, who had persisted in delicate showmanship regarding the craft needed to do what he did, began to concede. He had lost the completeness the job offered; he couldn't savor a day's labor any longer. It brought him now only cramps and miserable migraines. Leaving the rituals that had dictated his daily behavior hadn't been so discomforting,

he accepted the inevitable as he always did; eventually the dreadful symptoms subsided.

But, Redmond kept inside him an open book, and the chapter on getting up every morning to work was never finished. This forwarded his desperate call compelling purpose to befall him again. Like the brown autumn leaves twirling uncontrollably with the wind he moved perpetually without a destination. Any spot on the ground would do, whether the gutter welcomes him or the crowded sidewalk. To perform janitorial tasks or compete in a society of young blood, wherever the breeze let him drop would be sufficient. Today that silent gust guided him to the Eagle Pride office, Gerard was a good person, Redmond prayed held empathize. Money wasn't the problem, he was intelligent enough to save, but quitting his routine had disrupted him terribly.

Burrows growled louder when the blood bus came into view, sniffing the air madly while clawing at the loose dirt around him. Redmond made no relation to his friend's behavior and the peaceful bus built to save lives. He might even donate today, if things went well with Gerard that was, he just might.

### III

Boyd came back outside to await Gerard's arrival, and then to see the wiseasses face after he told him he was terminated. The cocky prick slacked off constantly now, it seemed he thought being lazy was a required trait to the job. There was a way to prove him wrong though, and that was to stop threatening and start acting. Gerard would be fired, he didn't question that, although Boyd wouldn't admit to himself that in two days or less held be offering him another chance. Because, no matter how irritated he became, Gerard's talents remained exceptional.

Maybe he wouldn't fire him today, but if he was late once more Boyd would possess no mercy. Held tear the little genius part, held shove a pink slip down his throat, he'd...

"Excuse me, sir, would you care to donate some blood? For a worthy cause of course."

The stranger's timing could not have been worse, Boyd shifted the contempt he had for Gerard to his new trespasser.

"What is this, do you think cause I'm fat you can hassle me into going on your bus? Do I look like I feel obligated to let you morons jab me with metal tubes and give me AIDS or cancer or some other God awful disease?!"

"No sir," the stranger remarked simply, "but giving blood is very painless, you'll be grateful when it's over, and proud."

His head was spinning, doing flips all around, losing balance. All at once Boyd couldn't see the face of the man talking to him, it had peeled off leaving only loose dangling flesh particles and the eyes. They seared cruelly in their wild dance about his face. He wanted to scream, found he could not, then wanted to give blood instead. Something was different now, the eyes had done it, Boyd didn't know what. He felt younger, vigorous and agile, unconquerable, ready to do his part. He looked again at the blood mobile worker and felt stupidity, how had he thought this man's face wasn't there? He had a nose, a mouth, two ears ... and two eyes; they had a radiant afterglow to them.

The stranger pitched a few things to Boyd, but he only caught his name, Corliss. Their conversation was brief, lasting the walk from the front of Eagle Pride to the bus a short distance away. Boyd Nayer forgot Gerard and his sly tactics, the huge deal with a major corporation he was scheduled to look over, and everything else that had been weight aboard his brain. It had been taken, and he in no way ever comprehended that.

Corliss laid his hand down on Boyd's shoulder, "You're a great man for doing this buddy, you're our first customer today." They entered the bus.

"And certainly not the last," said a man slightly taller than Corliss; he was standing back by the steering wheel. Boyd wanted to compliment them, but his exhilaration wouldn't ease, the eyes he had stared into still haunted him. His impression of the other operator looking somewhat older than Corliss eluded him, it didn't fit. Boyd became aware that it was because he couldn't recall what the man looked like, only his soothing black eyes. He experienced fear in his belly that felt bottled up, his talk with Corliss had happened less than

two minutes ago, but already his face had disintegrated itself from Boyd's memory.

A hand grabbed his right arm, another his left, suddenly he was hoisted on to a table.

"Whoa, wait, wait, shouldn't you get some information about me?" They ignored him, a third member joined them, she was beautiful. He halted his struggle, and focused his attention on the girl. She didn't walk across the bus, but seemed almost to glide. The tall male sunk his fingers into Boyd's face, pulling his gaze till they met.

"Make it easy, never stop looking at her, this is a bad dream you'll wake up from in bed."

"I never dreamed anything like her," Boyd answered, and then they were upon him. The tall one that had spoken to him and who might be older than Corliss pulled off his shoes, Corliss got behind him and held Boyd's upper half down. He was powerful; Boyd couldn't move his arms an inch. The girl took hold of his legs, her strength equally dominant.

"Corliss, are you ready?" asked the taller man.

"Yes, Revelin."

"Phyre, are you ready?"

"Yes, Revelin."

"Then let us take blood purely, and consume as God intended." Boyd was trying to put some sense into what was happening; he'd never heard of holding a patient down. He wanted to look at Corliss's face, but he was too far back. The illogical name of the operator first started to strike Boyd as odd. Actually, he thought, all their names were odd, extremely strange.

The one they called Revelin revealed a long metal cylinder, presented it, then slammed the sharp edge into Boyd Nayer's big toe. He howled in pain, but did not writhe all over the table, Phyre and Corliss held him too tightly. He felt his insides being pulled towards the tube, a tremendous stretch dragging the precious essence he boasted out of his body. His thinking began to break apart with the stinging torture, he could feel himself being drained, it was menacing. Screaming stopped being possible, instead, Boyd's mouth contorted into a suffering grimace. He saw momentarily the three people who brought him the wretchedness;

there was no beauty in any. Their faces, forgotten, were gone. Replaced with hollow gaping holes supporting two eyes apiece that appeared suspended in the air. What they really were was evil, ugly towards mankind, grotesque creatures. He wondered why they were taking his blood, and then heard Revelin speak. It made Boyd shiver, he didn't think they knew he could still hear, he didn't care, the pain had wiped out recollections of what had brought him here.

"Patience my pupils, after this one we won't need to store anymore, the two of you can gorge whoever comes along."

Boyd progressively began to black out, he wondered why they were taking his blood, and thought he already knew. They'd save it, till thirst came, and then they'd drink; he had been tricked. When death concluded the pain ripping Boyd apart he was still, and indeed grateful.

#### IV

It was 8:00 when Gerard Baratta stepped onto the curb, he was exactly one hour late. Eagle Pride's lights were on, but he didn't see Boyd behind his desk. Not once had he seen an empty seat where Boyd's behind parked itself everyday. It wasn't only peculiar, it was disturbing. There was too much quiet for a Wednesday morning, the street should be bursting with people. But only a few infrequent passers-by moved through the sidewalks.

"Hey, Gerard, hey!"

He glanced over his shoulder and saw Redmond LeFurge fastening his pace to join him; Burrows followed obediently, keeping a healthy stare on the blood bus across from them.

"Hi Red," Gerard said, "what are you doing out so early?"

The older man wiped his brow, sweat glazed his hand afterward. His face had a multitude of wrinkles, they almost seemed to spread out by each passing day. Redmond didn't open his mouth too quickly, afraid that saying something faulty would ruin his best chance, he collected himself and spoke,

"I wanted to ask you, something very important. I've been working all my life, from

sunrise to set I played an honest day. Nobody can ever tell me that I've wasted anything, or missed out on the wonders they've had ... I would've liked to have had a child. But you see, me and working, and Burrows here is all I ever had." Gerard looked half-asleep, partially confused, Redmond hurried to be clearer.

"The thing is," he said, "I lost the working part, it ain't in me no more; not for what I did all those years. It isn't money, it isn't pride, I just need to have purpose again. What I want to ask you is if there's a way you can get me a job, I'll do anything you have to be done."

Gerard was silent.

"Anything," Redmond repeated.

The young programmer nodded, then said, "Actually Red, it's pretty damn funny that you asked, Boyd's been sayin' how we need somebody to clean up around there. Simple shit, nothing major. I'll tell him if he doesn't hire you I'll quit, and," he added with a grin, "if you don't work out I'll tell him he can fire me. He'll do it then, if only to spite me. I have to get in now but meet me for lunch and I'll bring you back and introduce the two of you."

"Thanks, Gerard, thank you, you won't have to quit or get fired cause I'm gonna work like a bastard once more."

They shook hands, Redmond had to pull Burrows to get him to walk; the dog had never stopped looking at the bus.

## V

She glanced at her friend with a gaping expression, stricken by what had been said. When Tiffany realized she was being stared at her eyes fell on Kacela,

"What," she said still smiling, "What's the big dead?"

"He's thirty Tiff," Kacela answered.

"Don't start, okay, I'm not stupid, I don't need you to fill in for my mother."

"Who's going to if I don't? Kacela thought but didn't say, it would do Tiffany no good arguing a drunken parent's ethics. She wished her happiness, Tiffany was mostly a bitch, but they had known each other too long to break their friendship

now. They got along wonderfully, with minor daily quarrels about lipstick and nail polish remover. If she would stop flaunting herself in front of ridiculously older men, there wouldn't be a problem.

"I'm worried about you," Kacela finally said, "just don't tell me that you, fucked him." Tiffany looked at her, smirking not quite loud enough to be humorous, Kacela knew the face and what it meant.

"Tiff, you're seventeen!"

Her friend lost the grin and replaced it with hurtful shame, "You didn't have to say it that way."

"What other way is there to say it?!"

"We made love," Tiffany stated, sounding more like she was trying to convince herself rather than Kacela.

Nothing else was said about the aging busboy and his nights with Tiffany Tilden. Kacela knew that they still had the rest of the day to talk, time is all she needed, and there wasn't any reason to think they didn't have plenty. Right after they checked on Tiffany's computer at the repair place, she'd bring it up again. If only to insure that it did not occur twice.

Eagle Pride slid into their vision, parked nearby was a blood bus, Kacela heard voices flooding from it; there was a discussion going on. A young woman made her way down the steps, obviously approaching Tiffany and Kacela.

"She's beautiful," Tiffany whispered; her friend nodded.

"Hello girls," the woman said, "I think you know what I'm about to ask." Kacela listened when she spoke, and became profoundly frightened. This woman appeared completely natural on the outside; her bright brown hair was lovely. She was dressed perfectly normal, another person in the city similar to everyone. There wasn't anything in the way she talked, presented herself, or moved. It was her eyes; they flickered through different shades so frequently that Kacela had thought she'd been seeing illusions. The worst sensation was the sudden desire to give blood. That was logical, that would be the answer. She looked at Tiffany, they both smiled, and followed the woman with multi-colored eyes. Kacela didn't think about the busboy

who had bedded her best friend, the blood donor girl talked rhythmically now, you couldn't help but listen.

There were two more people on the bus, she saw, both guys; they had smiles that looked too joyous.

"What are your names?" asked the taller man.

"Tiffany Tilden and Kacela Janicelli," Tiffany answered.

"Come on," he said still in good spirits, "I mean what people call you in the streets. Your friends and neighbors, how do they refer to you?"

Neither of the girls were scared, they could've been asked anything, their replies would be astonishingly honest for seventeen.

"Tiff and Kacy," Kacela said, "What do we call yo..."

The woman who had led them on grabbed Kacela and through her into an interrogation room. The shorter man, Corliss, his name was Corliss (Kacela didn't know how she knew his name) took hold of Tiffany. Her friend attempted to wriggle free but Corliss's grip was too disciplined.

"Let me go, let go of me!" she squealed desperately.

Kacela got on her feet, wanting to help, but the strange-eyed woman (Phyre) blocked her path.

"Pretty girl, you will always be young, don't be afraid when you're in the dark," Phyre said, her eyes now blazing intricate red. The man who was in charge came towards Tiffany and Corliss, Kacela didn't know his name and didn't care to. One of the tubes used to extract blood was held firmly in his hand. He stabbed it into Tiffany's neck, straight through, so that the edge poked out on the other side. Tiffany irked a wheeze, fresh blood dribbled down her chin, some of it splattered on Corliss's face. The leader left it there for a second, lodged in Tiffany, then pulled it away. Kacela saw the tears accumulating in her friend's eyes, and prayed she was already dead.

Phyre went to them, placed her mouth over one hole in Tiffany's throat, and drank; Corliss did the same. Their faces changed as they imbibed the scarlet blood, almost melting into nothing,

sliding off and disappearing.

She wanted not to see Tiffany being murdered, or the faceless demons devouring her, the leader stepped closer to her as she thought this.

"This one is mine," his arm flashed out and struck Kacela's leg, she screamed. It didn't look like he had put much force behind the blow, but the burning in her kneecap was terrible, she couldn't stand at all, or get away. He came to be staring at her intently, directly above her body, soon Kacela knew only darkness.

## VI

Burrows's whining quickly became nerve-shattering, the animal had been going on since they returned to the park. Normally he would have gone gallivanting around, sniffing trees and marking territory. Today his energy

was, focused on continuously echoing the same tired cry of distress. His friend might be having an inner calamity, they were both old but Redmond was in better shape; finding out what's wrong with his friend was his first priority. Though he decided to take a small detour, Eagle Pride would delay him only a few minutes, not long at all.

At the same time Gerard had gone outside for a smoke. He breathed in the gray aroma, tasting it and feeling that early cigarettes could sometimes be revolting. Besides this conclusion his thoughts were riddled by Boyd Nayer's apparent disappearance.

After his original fear had passed from seeing his employer was gone, Gerard had been minutely elated. He had figured that Boyd would come eventually, and what better way to shut your boss up about tardiness than him being late himself? But that was a foolish opinion. The cold, half finished coffee resting close to jelly donut remains confirmed that Boyd had been here. Gerard flicked his smoldering cigarette into a drain gutter, not able to finish it. He was turning to go back inside and call the police when a hand grabbed his shoulder. The grip did not feel rough but it stopped him directly.

"Sorry to bother you, I don't know if you noticed our bus, but would you be willing to give blood today?"

It was a woman's voice, he whipped his head back to see her. Immediately Gerard had an impression similar to part of your body falling asleep. This was leisurely though, not uncomfortable. She said something he didn't hear, Gerard was busy studying her face. The girl looked sincere, and attractive; he could tell she honestly wanted him to give blood.

She pulled her hand off his shoulder, and the tingling feeling was broken. It all seemed to exit him and retreat back into the woman's body.

*I have to get going, Gerard thought, there's no time for hitting on this girl. Boyd could be in some shit, and like him or not the guy could need help. I can't wait, need to go.*

The woman's eyes centered the asleep feelings now, Gerard found himself looking intensely into them. *Have to go, things need to get done. No time for hitting, no time for, oh fuck it she's gorgeous! No, time for anything, except giving blood. Yes! Why didn't I think of that before?!*

He instantly felt relief, the girl was already leading him to the bus. Gerard didn't remember agreeing to donate, but he also knew the girl's name suddenly and stopped questioning everything else. Phyre, so destructive, yet how tantalizing. It made her seem exotic, a definite creation in a world of bad guesses. "... and if you'll just step up here we'll be done very soon."

He had a tiny idea that if she had said nothing he would've been doing something more important right now. But he didn't distinguish what that something was and dismissed the notion by telling himself there wasn't anything more important than talking to Phyre. Inside he was introduced to two other blood bus workers, Corliss and Revelin; he wondered why none of them had last names. The way Revelin moved and spoke told Gerard that he must possess the highest rank a bus worker can obtain. When his mouth made words Phyre and Corliss were silent and observant.

"You're a blessed man, the last client we'll have today. Because of that your expiration will be extra quick. You're the last alcoholic refreshment before a lengthy walk home, you're one for the road Mr. Baratta."

Then he saw what the others had seen before him, Gerard witnessed the same astonishing event. The three things that had once looked like people mutated into dreadful abnormalities. Their faces vanished, receding into their bodies and ebbing away. Revelin's jaw had gone, leaving behind only an infinite set of thorny teeth and two sneering eyes. From down his endless gullet an obscure voice rose out, "P-p-prepare for t-the afterliffffe Baratta."

Gerard couldn't move his legs, a scream had become stuck in his neck and would not come out. Revelin advanced, his face still morphing, his teeth salivating and shining.

A side window of the bus exploded in a hailstorm made with broken glass, a large black form entered as well. All present spun their heads to see Burrows, but the dog didn't hesitate for greetings. He leapt up with precision, sinking his incisors into Revelin's neck. Revelin pulled to get free, but Burrows plainly bit down harder. When he did manage to release himself from the dog, most of his jugular vein went with it.

Gerard made his move then, pushing Revelin down and stifling his scream. The back door in front of him opened; Redmond LeFurge hopped into the scene. Phyre ran for him, all beauty gone, she didn't see the blackjack in Redmond's hand. He swung at her orbiting eyes, they both popped, what looked like yellow pus splashed Redmond's shirt. Phyre shrieked for several moments then collapsed.

Burrows cornered Corliss, the creature had fully transformed back to his human face. He was pleading with the dog to stay back. Neither Gerard nor Redmond understood what was happening, but they weren't slowing down. A hand settled around Gerard's ankle; it was Revelin; blood looked to be evacuating tremendously from his wounded neck. The monster reared his arm up, held in his hand was the same metal tube used before. Gerard pulled his leg away, Revelin threw the tool; it was his last effort in life. It missed Gerard completely, and instead traveled directly into Corliss's chest. Corliss moaned, then used the lapse to make his escape through the broken window. Burrows attempted to follow him, but the jump back was



too much for the old dog.

### Summation

By nightfall, the police had come and taken the blood bus. A few investigators were still roaming the area for clues, hoping to find the victims. Gerard and Redmond found out that besides Boyd at least seven other people were missing. The two friends sat on a bench overlooking the street, Burrows was sleeping at Redmond's feet, rousing at intervals to scratch and grunt. Gerard owed his life to the animal, and first understood the bond him and Redmond had. He was about to say something when a strange noise entered the air.

"I hear something," Gerard said, he lifted his head up more, "this way."

Burrows also got up, intercepting the same sounds a Gerard. They settled on the street; Burrows began to scratch insanely at the ground; it was a spot that the blood bus would've been covering. They got onto their knees, feeling places that Burrows seemed most interested in. They found crevices, and were dumbfounded when part of the street lifted up. The human screams from below, not condensed anymore, rang out in their true volume.

"Help me! Please get me out of here"; mixed into this was hysterical sobbing.

"Hold on," Gerard yelled, "give us a second and we'll have you out!"

"What's your name?" Redmond asked.

"Kacela," the girl yelled, "Kacela Janicelli!"

"Calm down Kacela, you're gonna be fine," Redmond said, "it's over now." She told them about a hole in the blood bus's floor, the location of the bodies wasn't a mystery anymore.

"My leg's broken," Kacela said as Redmond and Gerard pulled her into the night, "But fuck being careful with me, just get me out!"

The three fell on the sidewalk, Kacela put her arms around them and wept, none of them wanting to take another look in the hole. Only Burrows stood above it, evidently unaffected by the ghastly stench attributed to decaying flesh. He didn't howl now but lowered his snout to the

concrete, they stayed like that till emergency workers led them away.

He wandered for days, hiding during daylight hours in the trees of the woods. Throughout that time he developed plots for vengeance, continuing on strength he didn't know existed. When he came to the ocean, he decided to bathe the blood off, and grinned. His reasoning was numbed with lunacy, it caused him to forget what salt does to open gashes.

His hands made only a slight twitch when the water rose over his fingers. The tiniest of splashes marked the formerly undisturbed sea patch as the final resting place of a damned soul. Had anyone been looking down from above, they would've seen Corliss's body gradually descending. Mortality knowledge at long last reaching his blue-shaded dead ears.

If it wasn't for the sun his eyes would be black, and the glistening sunspots atop the surface would cease to shimmer so gently. Drifting down into nothingness, his eyes reflecting the world of sun he'd lost, the world of carefully planned retaliations; Corliss smiled no more.

The End

## The Fever

by the P'an Ku Zoo

*The blow lands.  
Flint-hard knuckles strike  
the pliant pulp of your cheek.  
Each beryl eye sparks like kindling  
into a sulfurous flame,  
a sudden inferno.*

*Singed lashes like parched weeds  
abrade; a little brush-fire  
fanning down the bruised terrain  
of your skin to the sloped dunes  
of your lips, scorched Sahara sands.*

*The topography of your face,  
a scarred Pangea ready to tear,  
swells. Clots, blood blossoms, form-  
an odd macramé of sinew.  
The adrenaline pulse of the heart  
ignites, a frenzied firecracker.  
Molten breath like wind explodes  
catching wild wisps of whirlwind hair,  
a thousand red filaments, unbound  
curling in the blaze.*

*Flesh cinders fall to the ground,  
a collapsed monument.  
Clouds of smoldering ash  
drip searing pain  
through the blistering steam  
arising from your carrion chest.*

*Startling sparkles  
of light,  
dwindling, falling.  
Strobing sight,  
watching life's flight  
streak away.  
Vision flashes, crashing.  
Iridescent smash...*

*The pavement's release.  
A rising whisper of smoke.*



Flower Pencil drawing by Ray Ward

Alcoholic Bob  
by Napoleon Kernessant

*Bob is standing in front of a dizzy glass  
drowning his preoccupations with class  
suffocating all of his disturbing emotions  
drifting away from these customized locomotions,  
lifting his soul from each daily frame:  
true happiness being his ultimate aim.*

*He feels each ounce dripping into his silent bloodstream,  
transporting him into the heart of an astonishing dream,  
reducing his sorrow into the size of a shadow-dime,  
distorting the accuracy of his vision,  
lowering him into the warmth of a bright illusion  
as he loses gradually the track of time.*

*Whenever he reawakens from his pleasant nightmare  
after breathing a zip of fresh air  
he realizes that his problems trailed him into the next day  
while being unaware that, if not solved, they can't be washed away.  
Although alcohol is piercing his heart to the core  
Bob still feels a burning desire for an encore.*

## The Factor

by Sandra M. Urquhart

*Can I talk to you a minute?  
Take a load off your feet.  
There's a factor and a person here,  
I think that you should meet.*

*Well, first is the intelligent lady,  
Kinda shy...a little meek...  
But that's not the one to talk to now...  
She's not the one to seek.*

*The factor is affecting her too,  
But she's not the primary one...  
The factor aroused desire in both,  
For physical stimulation.*

*The wild child lacks the...  
Self-control, that the lady holds in cheek,  
But that self-control train...  
with the heat and the steam...  
is heading for a wreck.*

*Certain looks, certain scents...  
Certain muscles that accent...  
the positive of the male physique...  
Liquid drops and knees get weak...*

*All from thoughts of you that grow...  
Licking lips as moisture flows...  
Feeling heat from the furnace hot...  
Though log not yet in oven pot...*

*Imagination fueled by twigs...  
Kisses...samples of what the whole tree is...  
A magnificent oak...a strong redwood...  
My earth would open if you should...*

*Decide in me to plant your root...  
I'll open up...receive your shoot...  
Inside my earth so warm and deep  
The desire, the factor reaps...*

*Playing havoc...my body's weak  
Making me ache to crawl, walk, then leap...  
Up to the place in which you run...  
To touch the hair trigger on my fully loaded gun.*

## PAPA'S MAGIC HANDS

by Zenaida Smith

*I sit in the barn to watch Papa at work.  
I marvel at his magic hands, always changing  
things around. The barn doesn't hold hay but rice  
Papa scoops from a tin box into a stone mortar  
to skin. Both hands on the pestle Papa raises it,  
moving his head upward, following the pestle  
to its highest pitch. In slow motion, eyes locked  
on the mortar, he lets the pestle slowly down  
as if apologizing for hurting the grain.*

*With his magic hands joined, scooping again and again  
handfuls of peeled rice from the mortar, Papa sifts  
the grain through his large fingers as he bends over  
to blow the casing away. Like insect wings,  
the casings, caught in the sun rays striking  
through few cracks in the barn's oak slats, swirl and swirl  
before resting on a blanket, which Papa folds  
and puts away until he mixes it with soil  
and feeds it back to the land. After much scooping  
and bending and blowing and sifting, Papa shoves  
the rice into jute sacks ready for everyday meals.*

*Papa fusses a lot with the jute sacks, too.  
He mounts them in square wood skeleton-boxes  
he builds with his own hands. He tucks each opened end  
on its top, "like a mouth," Papa says, opening  
and closing the sack.  
"Here," he takes my long thin fingers, long like his  
and doing the same, he takes his fingers to his lips,  
and says "See?" The words sneak from his mouth into the sack:  
"You open, fill, pull the string, like a laundry bag. That's all."*

*"That's all?" But my hands bleed when I imitate him.*

*Papa's hands grow yucca, corn, potatoes, beans, and some  
Fruit trees: mamey, mango, papaya, which he sprays  
for bugs with a mixture of water and soap.*

*Papa's hands never rest. Always changing things around:  
saving buds in tin cans he buries in deep holes  
he digs in the barn; picking yucca roots  
sorting corn seeds, timing when and what to do.  
"To not wear out the soil," Papa says while I watch.  
Later, not much later, the same hands are hidden  
in his pockets refusing to wave good-bye.  
Good-bye to the land of which he is deprived.  
Good-bye to the rice barn. Good-bye to his child  
flying to another land; watching, watching  
her father's hands searching, in his pockets  
for the pouch he does not find, and then, he does!  
He finds the pouch he made with his own magic hands  
resembling the jute sack he used to make for rice.  
This he fills with red and black and sandy soil.  
He finds the tiny pouch, untied, soil running  
through his fingers which he collects in his left hand  
letting the thin stream fall back into the pouch's mouth.  
I'm walking sideways towards the gate, watching  
watching Papa's hands which hand me the pouch  
which never wave good-bye, which hide the sobs  
he covers with those very magic hands.*



**Breakfast at the Biltmore** B&W Photograph by Franka Meadows



A los amantes  
by Alexis Vega

*La noche está azul  
y es larga  
nítida extensión de sombras y sombras  
la luna sale y entra.*

*Ustedes se refugian en sus promesas  
que prometen  
noches de luna azul.*

*Ustedes  
tienen que amarse  
es necesario amarse  
es justo amarse  
en los bosques  
en el Mercado  
en el cine  
en la playa  
en la cama  
bajo la efímera luna  
en las noches azules  
y largas.*

Blanca (White Girl)

by Juan Griego

*Strange smiles  
And twisted thoughts  
Etched on her skin  
A pale reminiscence of a dream  
In sleep I wink  
Feel heat-from-white lights  
Staring  
Feet-pulsating veins  
Clear flesh and blue rivers  
Marked through red explosions  
And nails escaping tenderness*

*Bruise too easily  
Butt petite with curves  
Covered in yellow  
Feathered hair slips over  
Angels face who speaking  
Screams salvation from age  
On such a joyous day-weeping  
Body grazing  
Soft material covered white  
With boys hair shedded  
She waits anxiously  
For friends dress too quickly-not  
Fleeing from castles  
Wealth fleeing from pockets  
They rest close to legs  
Ready to spread  
Acceptance*



**Yin-Yang Dancer** Sculpture by Erin K. Hanna

## Some Strange Fire...

by Anastasia Kline

*Some strange fire is burning around,  
I forgot native town and land -  
Now I glorify love and renounce  
Being a daredevil man.*

*What was I? A weed-grown tree  
In clutches of poisoning potion  
But today I say "No" to my spree,  
To the life spent in baneful emotions.*

*All I need is to see hazel eyes,  
To be lost in their magic flow...  
Let me turn your past into mine  
So that you don't leave me alone.*

*You are tenderness; you are light,  
But your spiny heart doesn't know  
That a reckless man can be resigned,  
That he loves you wherever you go.*

*I would mend my ways. Though it's hard -  
I would stop writing poems,  
Just to take your hand and your heart,  
To touch your hair colored like autumn.*

*I would go with you North and South,  
I would stay in any land...  
For the first time I love and renounce  
Being a daredevil man.*



**In the Spirit of My Ancestors** B&W Photograph by Erika L. Watkins



Untitled Cut paper by Christine Asleij

I Don't Watch the News  
by Sean Sanchez

*You're right  
I don't watch the news  
Not like you  
In front of the tube  
For hours on end  
Until my mind is poisoned with paranoia  
Seasoned with delusion  
By the media's drive for ratings  
As voices of so-called experts tell me*

*Anything can happen  
We're not safe*

*You would have me seated alongside you  
Reclining on the black leather couch  
In a feeble attempt to educate and protect  
My brain and all its promise rotting  
Yours too ignorant  
Stupid, I dare say  
To see the truth  
I am to be free  
As far from your diseased mind as possible  
Exploring my place in this world*

*I don't watch the news  
But if it's any consolation  
I still know what's going on  
Without the ringing in my ears  
I read the papers*

## King Night's Feast

by Frances Weinstock

*Before the King of Night unveils His moon  
And He spills its pale lighting on a glassine pond  
And before His Highness flourishes His diamond wand  
Displaying worlds not ever seen at noon,*

*Before the dusk awakes to do her task,  
And she rubs pearlescent strands from sleepy eyes,  
As her mallow, so grandly, sweeps the skies,  
The vermilion satin tablecloths are cast*

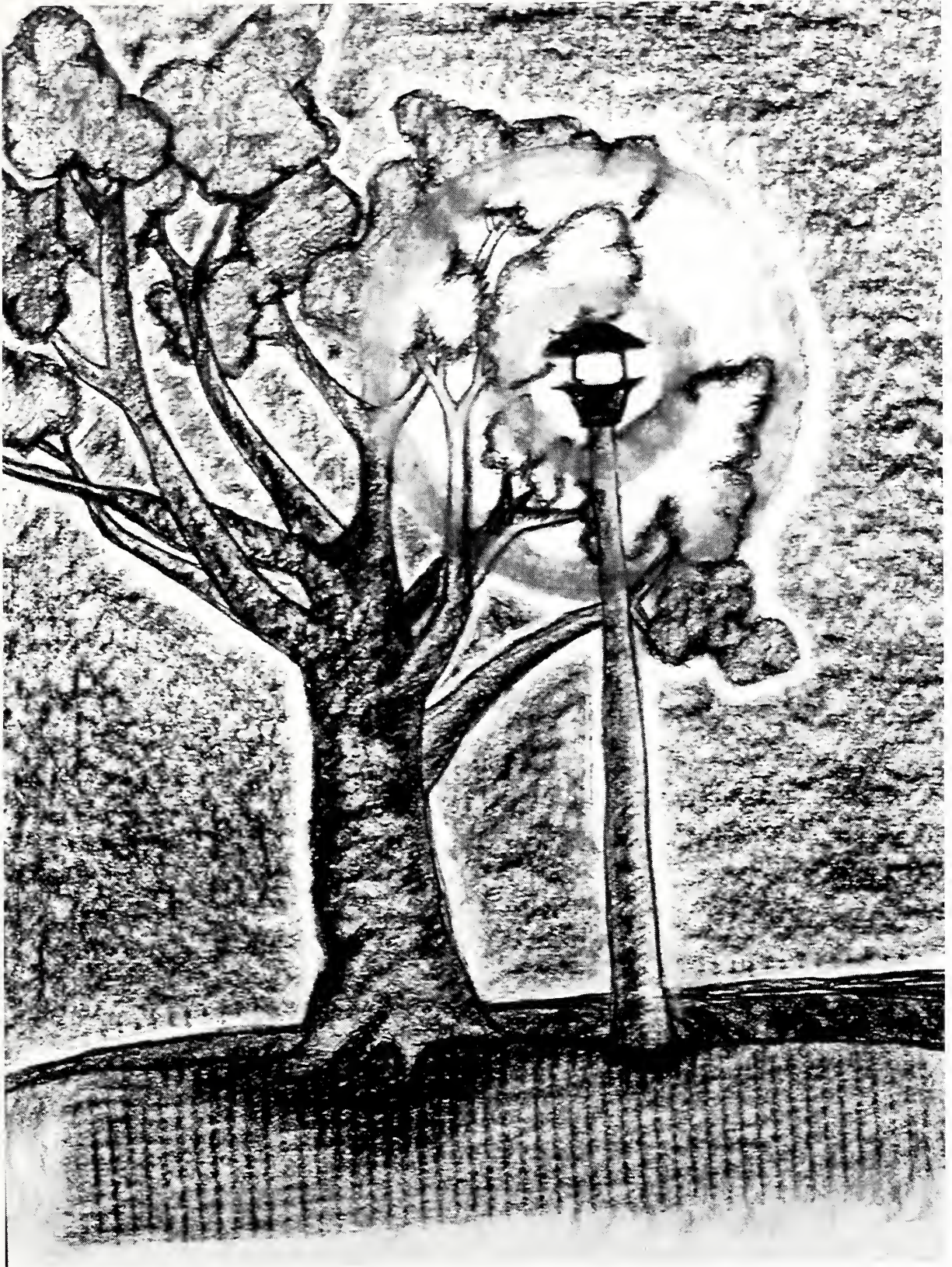
*Before the sunset's fireworks begin  
When katydids' and crickets' instruments are tuned  
Prior to when youthful hearts and love commune  
And golden passions fizz to lure them in*

*Before the din of days enjoys its fling  
Flirtatious rainbows kiss luxurious rain and sun  
And, softly, playful breezes have their fun  
While, sleepily, the birds begin to sing*

*Before the Silver Queen announces dawn  
And Royal Tables have been dully cleared,  
Their luscious banquet spread consumed, revered,  
Before the newborn day can stretch and yawn*

*Before Sun sprinkles gold throughout the East,  
And her wealth is strewn around for all to reap,  
Before the Royal Host of Night has gone to sleep  
All hungry lovers share in His lavish Feast.*





Tree of Darkness Charcoal by Michael Rodriguez

## Perceptual Strife

by Michelle Becker

“Yes, I know who you are.”

“Do you?” There was sarcasm in that glacial tone; a sense of bitterness that made no move to hide.

Hero leaned back in his chair, wrapping his cloak about him as if it were a magic shield. Fixing his gray-blue eyes on the man before him, he felt the muscles in his neck and face tighten up. “You won’t let me be—”

“Why should I!?” A creak of the chair and Fatale was on his feet, glaring at Hero with dark eyes that seemed to grow deeper and darker with each passing second. “You should be gone ... nothing but weak...”

“So I should be diabolical and wicked like you, is that it? Will I be strong then?”

“God, I hate you.” Fatale kicked the chair to a corner and began pacing, dark hair hiding his pale face and his own cloak softly billowing out behind him. He let out an antagonized sigh. “Why can’t you just go away?”

Hero felt a small smile grace his pretty, pale lips. “Wouldn’t it be best if we tried getting along?”

Fatale looked at him disdainfully, a blush coloring his cheeks. Yes, he was getting angry. “You know that cannot be. One of us must fall. Flowers are always fighting for the sun...but there is only one sun.”

Hero didn’t budge. The gray in his eyes was overwhelming the blue. “I will not surrender. You had me before, many times. And I pulled through your webs. Fatale, you have to be reasonable here.”

*I remember green fields and a sky so blue I thought it was merely a mirror of the ocean and nothing more. I worried about nothing; why should a child worry? I remember going to the pond with Mother, laughing at her when she told me stories of how frogs came from lily pads. I had never felt so safe and so secure...I wanted those feelings to last forever.*

Fatale’s eyes shrink to tiny slits. “Selfish little bastard,” he whispered.

Hero frowned. “It just came to my head,” he protested. “Would you like me to ignore my memories?”

Fatale said nothing. He walked to the one window the room possessed, fixing his eyes on the violet moon that hung low in the sky. He stared at the moon the way he stared at everything and everyone. There was loathing in those eyes; a wish to destroy anything, no matter how beautiful it was.

Hero wrapped his cloak even tighter about him, feeling a chill in the air. It wasn’t the cold. “Don’t misunderstand me. I want to get rid of you. I could kill you. But something holds me back...I can’t explain what...”

Nothing.

“You know why I would love to kill you?”

Fatale’s dark head turned, his pale face reflecting the moonlight. “Because you like the taste of blood?” he joked dryly. “Isn’t that what you warriors fight for?”

Hero withdrew a dagger from his boot, twirling it expertly in his hand. “You took something very, very important away from me,” he said, a growl bubbling in the back of his throat.

Fatale laughed, his facial features looking disgustingly carefree. “Oh, you mean your little girlfriend?” he jived.

Hero ducked his head; his eyes grew glassy with restrained tears. Fatale beamed. He loved it.

*I remember Ru yelling at me. I ran down that evil hall and it felt as if Doom were making my heart beat dreadfully louder and slower every time my feet hit the ground. And then I saw the body on the floor; the face staring up at the ceiling. Dead. But the eyes were still wet and the body still warm. When I knelt beside her, I was ready to wake her up and tell her to go ahead with Ru. I was ready to promise her that we would leave the ruins soon. I was ready to promise her the life we would have and the kids we would create and cherish. But I could only hold the limp body close to mine and cradle it back and forth as if she was a stillborn child that a mother could not quite let go of yet. I could only close her eyes and smell her hair and cry and curse God and Creation for existing. I could only sit there and think, “What need is there to go on?”*

Fatale saw the one tear fall and hit the marble floor, melting with smoothness, never to be seen again. "I thought brave warriors never cried."

Hero didn't look up. "It is rare. Rarely in a lifetime does it occur. Me...the number of my tears would put a bard to shame." He looked up, giving Fatale the coldest of looks. "Do I have you to thank for this weakness?" he asked, his eyes going from storms to tempests.

Fatale snorted. "You asked for it, after what you kept from me."

Hero stood, gripping the dagger so hard his knuckles turned white. God, how he wanted to throw that dagger. "You took her away from me! You killed her and she was all I ever wanted!"

Fatale ripped the dagger from Hero's hand and threw it to the wall, where it shattered due to his inhuman strength. "She only made things worse. She was a threat. She kept me away from you and I couldn't let her do that, now could I?"

Hero's tears were gone. "You liked it when Mother died, didn't you?"

Fatale was beginning to snarl; a glimpse of perfectly clean, smooth white teeth came into sight. "Don't even try that—"

"You liked it because she was the same as Seraph, didn't you? Was Mother a threat to you too?!"

Fatale screamed out in rage and with a thought sent Hero slamming into a wall. He strode angrily up to the fallen man and planted a booted foot firmly on his chest. When Hero came back to his senses he stared up at his nemesis, puzzled by Fatale's face. Such a look the marble features wore, a look Hero had never seen Fatale wear before.

"Know this," Fatale whispered softly, his voice strained. "I could do nothing to save Mother. When she died that day, I died."

"We both did," Hero added, knocking Fatale's foot away and getting up. "And I forgot about it...but you didn't."

Fatale's malevolent grin returned. "And thus begins our tale!" he chimed sarcastically.

Hero looked to the window Fatale had stood at earlier. "How does it begin?" he murmured.

"What do you mean how does it begin?" Fatale asked exasperatedly, but he eyed Hero curiously.

Hero's eyes flicked over to Fatale, hard and grave. "I mean how did it begin? How did all of this happen? Why...?" He squeezed his eyes shut and swallowed; his throat seemed to grow more parched by the minute. "Why did this happen?"

"I'm not an avid storyteller," Fatale grumbled, but after darting a look at Hero's distressed face he sat down on the floor, pushing his back into the wall and drawing his knees up to rest his arms casually on them.

"You had a sister," he began.

Hero looked up, his eyes converting from storms to clam seas.

Fatale wouldn't return the gaze. "She was only five," he continued placidly. "Looked just like you, except her hair was this...beautiful auburn. And it was a whole mop of tight curls. She looked like a doll. Mother liked to call her that...doll."

The skin about Fatale's eyes crinkled the slightest bit. He started rubbing the skin about his knuckles.

"Father...couldn't handle us well. When Mother went to the market he usually locked you and Sis up in your rooms. He usually forgot to feed you two. One day Mother came home early and realized what was going on."

Fatale's nervous fidgeting continued. He ducked his head and allowed the dark veil of his hair fall about his features.

"Who knows how long he beat her about? There was all this screaming and crying and cursing and thumps and bumps. You...you cowered in the corner of the kitchen, shaking like crazy. Sis, being only five and all, just started screaming. And of course she would. She was so tiny, helpless."

Fists clenched; the slim bones were etched out like tree branches. The knees drew up further until Fatale was hugging them to his chest, his cloak swaddling him like a newborn baby.

"After eternity all the noises ceased. All at once, like a light switch. You raised your head up but did not budge from the corner. Sis just stood there for a second, but after a moment something just came over her and she started screaming again.

"It was as if the world had ceased turning and began plummeting into the abyss. Father came into the room and snatched her up like a rag doll,

shaking her ferociously and hollering at her to shut up, shut up, shut up. Then they were gone from the room, and the most horrible sound came. A tiny strangled cry, so helpless and brimmed with baby tears. Then another frightful sound: a loud thump against the wall.

'You were too afraid to move, but you panicked. You were afraid he'd come after you next. So you squeezed behind the couch and tried to quiet your sobbing. You were there for hours. When it got dark you were scared as hell, but you couldn't sweat and gasp for breath any longer. You moved out from behind the couch...'

Hero's face was white; any color that had been in it was now gone. The lips were bloodless and drawn tight.

Fatale raised his head, but still refused Hero any looks of recognition. "The truck was gone, so

Fatale's brow crinkled. "Name?"

"My sister."

A moment, then a quick nod. And a surprise; Fatale reached out and lightly brushed back Hero's hair. "Caitlin. And she loved you very much."

The tears were there but they were held back because Hero froze when he felt that touch and heard that name. Then he shook his head and straightened up. "I know very little."

Fatale shook his head. "It does not matter. Just tell me."

Hero wiped his hands on his pants; they were damp and cold. "I knew that Ru took me under his wing when I was twelve. I had no recollection from my life before then. I knew that as time progressed, I started remembering a few things. Playing with Mother by the pond, stuff like that. Then I started having horrible flashbacks and strange nightmares.

*"You know what pain is because you were forced to deal with it ever since you came about. You don't know love or compassion or sweetness because I kept that all away from you. That turned you into the monster you are."*

that meant Father was gone. So wiping your grubby face and hurrying towards the front door, you decided to check the horses at the stable and wash up for supper. It never occurred to you... "

Hero shook his head, staring at Fatale repulsively and feeling incredibly sick because he knew...

"...that you would find Mother with a broken neck and Sis with a cracked skull."

Hero shook his head, his eyes spiked with crooked red lines and tears. "No, no, no..."

"Yes, yes, yes!" Fatale shouted, jumping up with catlike grace. He knelt down by Hero and ruffled the white locks. "Now it's your turn."

Hero swatted the hand away. "What the hell do you mean?"

Fatale tugged at the white locks, grinning when he saw irritation creep up onto Hero's face. "I want to know what you already knew...what you understood."

"Tell me her name first."

I realized that I felt very scared...very incomplete."

"How did you find out about me?" Fatale inquired softly.

"When I found Seraph dead...Ru told me." A trembling hand slipped down unconsciously to finger a braid that hung from his swordbelt. The hair, auburn mingled with gold, still felt warm ... as if she were still alive. "He told me..."

Fatale clamped down on his tongue: he tasted blood.

Another tear slid down Hero's cheek, running over the stain of the first.

"He told me I turned into you and killed her."

Fatale's lips trembled as he bit down harder on his tongue.

"When Ru adopted me, he began training me. After a while, he started to realize that I was becoming severely traumatized by the flashbacks and dreams. Then I had episodes where I suddenly threw a fit and got extremely aggressive. I would tear furniture up and beat the shit out of the

neighbors' kids."

Hero struggled for strength in his voice. He found very little. "Ru and I eventually had to move, and after that he took me to a bunch of doctors. They diagnosed me with multiple personalities. But there was only you...no other personas. Ru didn't tell me for years because he was afraid of frightening me. So he watched over me constantly."

Fatale swallowed his blood. "I came into play whenever you became emotionally unstable. You came into play whenever someone was being tender or affectionate. That was why—"

"You killed Seraph," Hero finished. "You killed her because she was a threat to you. She loved me and I loved her and you couldn't be around when she was near because her affections and gentle nature made me come out."

Fatale opened his mouth, but his lips couldn't form the two words he ached to say.

Hero looked up and a soft laugh came from his throat; it dawned on him.

"And you want to kill me because I repressed all the bad shit that happened. That's how you came about."

"Yes."

"Mother and Caitlin's death traumatized me, and that's when my persona split into two."

"Precisely."

"You're angry because I kept all the good memories from you. You're upset because you have all the bad memories."

"And now you know the rest of the story."

Hero toyed with the braid again. "You want revenge. I can't really blame you."

Fatale stood up. "Good, then it's settled. Shall I run you through with a sword? Strangle you? What?"

"You regret killing Seraph."

"You bastard." Fatale threw up his hands in exasperation, but he didn't bother masking his face.

"You know what pain is because you were forced to deal with it ever since you came about. You don't know love or compassion or sweetness because I kept that all away from you. That turned you into the monster you are. That's why you crave destruction. That's why you killed Seraph. You thought you could thrive on seeing me suffer. But

you are starting to see that you hate hurting me. You really don't want to bring harm to me because you have been hurt so much you're starting to sympathize with me. Isn't that why you were touching my hair so delicately a few moments ago? Isn't that why you were about to apologize for killing Seraph?"

"I'm going to kill you in such a ghastly way, just you wait," Fatale growled, tossing his hair back and nearly snapping his neck in the process.

"You realize if you kill me you're screwed."

The pale features smoothed out with bewilderment and Fatale cocked his head, fixing puzzled eyes upon Hero. "How the hell do you figure?"

"You know. And you also know that even if you killed me, you wouldn't be happy. Sure, I would be dead. But what good would that do? You honestly think you could live your whole life being destructive and bloody and cruel? You hate me because I kept all the good memories of Mother and home to myself. But you're just like everyone else. You want a mother. Maybe you want a lover. Why else would you be so angry with me? I kept you away from something you always wanted."

He hadn't expected or wanted to be rewarded with tears. But hot tears of blood slipped through the fingers that Fatale had caged his face with.

*I remember when the school bully had pushed me to the ground and kicked me, laughing about how I was such a freak because of my pale hair. Kick after kick into my stomach, and I was so scared and so helpless. I remembered the panic attack and my breathing becoming painful. Next thing I knew...I was standing up and hurling the kid against the fence, and I grinned when I saw the blood...*

Hero unsheathed his sword as he rose. "I had Ru perform the spell. I had him put me into the trance so I could speak to you and figure out what was going on. And now I understand and know everything. If you must, then come and kill me. But if you're willing to give me a minute, let me recommend something for you to consider."

Fatale's eyes were steady on Hero as the warrior slid the sword across the floor to him.

Ru's body was growing stiff from boredom when he saw the figure coming towards him.

At first he only heard the faraway thumps of booted feet against marble. When Ru rose from his seat, the stranger had reached the doorway, pausing and letting the folds of his cloak settle about him as if they were vanishing mist. The hood was drawn low over the head, only showing a faint outline of a mouth. Although the eyes could not be seen, Ru knew the man was looking dead straight at him.

"So which one are you?" Ru asked tensely, his hand near his sword just in case.

The moon broke through the rafters. The figure cast his head up, his eyes catching the light, flashing from opaque to iridescent.

"It's me," Hero clarified, pulling back the hood and shaking the ivory locks about.

Ru's fingers relaxed and he stared up at the moon. "So what happened?"

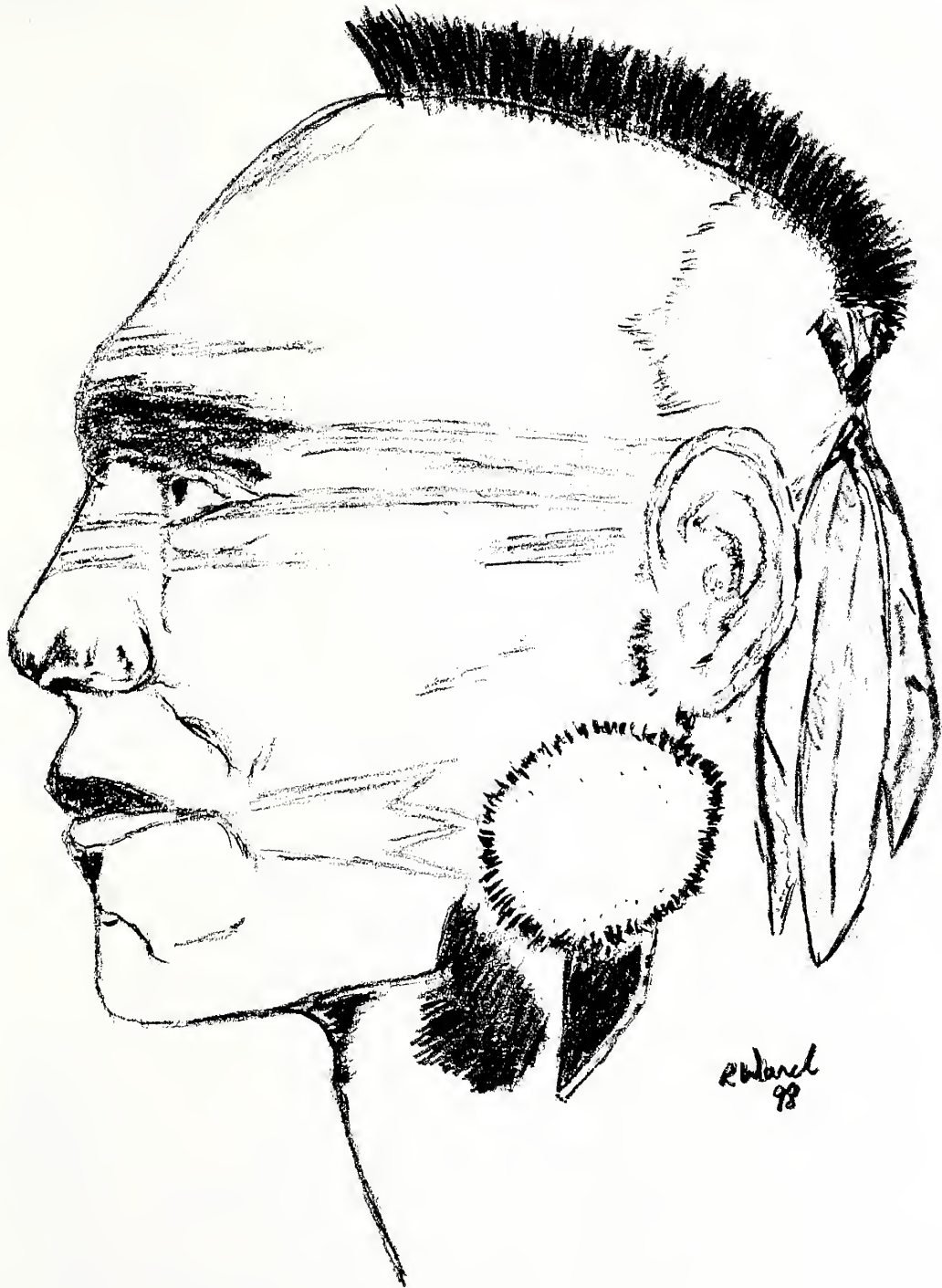
"Simple." Hero gathered up the bottles and twigs Ru had used for the spell and handed them to his mentor. "I gave him what he wanted."

Ru stuffed the components into his bag and tweaked a strand of Hero's hair. "So you're both ok."

"I'm ok."

Ru nodded. "Then let's go. Seraph is to be buried in a week. We got to get her to Talis."

Off they walked, mentor and hero.



Native Pencil drawing by Ray Ward

Sugarcane  
by Alexis Cohen

*My mouth is a battlefield of words  
each time I see you.  
The many moments you have  
shoved the sawed-off barrel down my  
clenched throat— longing for your hard  
grip. Gray, taloned fingers that teased  
me as a child.  
Now, driving the raw interstate  
27, a rusted white bus rolls by,  
the barren scenery triggers  
childhood memories like a loaded gun.  
In flashes*

*I recall  
watching you sweep my mother off her feet  
as I clutched the porcelain tile—  
the night you left in handcuffs while my sister  
collapsed on the concrete driveway. I replay  
all the court hearings, distant phone calls,  
being almost homeless. This time  
barbed wire greets me, your blue cotton  
prison uniform salute.  
I am supposed to watch your eyes,  
your lips, brush against my salted skin,  
but I concentrate on the smoke stacks in  
barren fields behind us.*

*You tell me how the sugarcane burns there  
through the night.*

*A train and its steel load runs by your home— the unforgiving rattle  
must kill you with its commotion of freedom as it  
passes by.*

*(Not quite your stop yet, Dad.)  
Your long face inlaid with tracks that cross your  
skin like webs, old and gray as if  
born from the burning smoke you breathe in.  
Our resemblances pokes through the conversation.  
You inhale hand-rolled cigarettes, I inhale you,  
and suddenly respect this man, this slave,  
this criminal.*





Man from Timor Watercolor by Mike Owens

## ***My Perfect Man***

by Annette Parker

I migrated to the United States in March of 1988, two months before my seventeenth birthday. My friend Susie came six months after I did. We had been friends for years. We shared our dislikes and our likes. Susie moved to New York and I came to Miami.

One day Susie called me to tell me that she had found the perfect man for me. Her boyfriend had a friend that she thought was perfect for me. She wanted to introduce us. I figured it couldn't hurt since we lived in different states. That same night he called

because I thought my mom would not let me go. To my surprise, she said yes. I was so excited because I was finally going to meet my guy face to face.

I left on my trip to New York a day before my birthday. I arrived at Lagueardia Airport at 11:30 PM. My flight was delayed. When I walked in, the baggage claim area was deserted except for a few people. He had described himself to me. I looked around and that's when I saw someone sitting in a wheelchair all dressed in white. When he saw me, he got out of the chair and walked towards me. He was over six feet tall, chocolate complexion and very nicely built. I must say I was very pleased

We talked for hours that night. It was like we had known each other for years.

and introduced himself. At first, I thought he must really be desperate to be calling someone he didn't know anything about long distance. We talked for hours that night. It was like we had known each other for years. We continued to communicate over the phone for a year. We would spend hours just talking about our lives and what we wanted in the future. I would rush home from work to call him or wait to receive his call. I thought I knew him.

I was getting ready to celebrate my eighteenth birthday, when he surprised me by inviting me to New York to meet his family. I was very excited but doubtful

with what I saw. When he got to where I was standing, he just stood there looking at me and smiling. We must have looked pretty stupid to the people around us. He took me to one of New York's famous Blimpie's joints to get something to eat. We chatted a while before calling it a night.

He threw me a surprised birthday party with his family and some of his friends. My friend Susie was in on the surprise. I had a wonderful time. Our relationship kept on, with us taking turns to visit each other. Finally, after six months of commuting, he decided to move to Miami. When he got here, I noticed things

that I did not like. He would take me to work, pick me up from work, then take me to school. I was not allowed to take the bus or get a ride from anyone else. When I would suggest otherwise, he would tell me he needed to protect me. This went on for a couple of years. At times when I would leave to visit my mom, he would call to say he forgot to tell me something or ask what time I was coming home. He started to follow me around. When I asked him why he was doing that he would say, "I am just trying to protect you". One morning we were home together and when I told him that I was going to my mom, he responded by telling me that he did not like me visiting my mom without him. I told him that I did not need to chauffeur around. I reminded him that I was taking care of myself before he got here. He got in to such a rage that I felt sure he was going to hit me. I waited until he left, then I packed my bags and left.

When he got home and realized that I had left, he called me. I did not answer the phone. When I did not answer, he came to the door and banged on the door for me to let him in so that we could talk. I refused to talk to him. I had had enough of his crap. He started to stalk me. I would look out my windows at night and his truck would be parked across the street. On my way to work, I would see him following me. He would call me on the job and harass me. What made me really scared was one day I was on my way home from visiting a friend. I noticed his truck behind me with his headlights on. He began to bump my car with his truck. I was so scared that I called the cops. When they arrived, he had left. The next morning, I took out a restraining order. That did not help much. He kept calling and following me around.

One night when he called he told me that if I did not come back to him, he was going to kill me, then kill himself. That did it for me. I decided that I had to move away to get rid of him. For two weeks, whenever he would call, I would sit and talk to him. I promised him that I was coming back to him. But I had something I had to take care of first. That made him stop coming to my house at nights. When he called that night, I told him that I would move back in the next evening. The next morning, I moved out of that city. It has been five years since I moved away. At times, I find myself looking in the rear view mirror to see if I am being followed. Even though my number is unlisted, whenever the phone rings, I get the chills. I am still single at this time. I guess I am still looking for my perfect man.



**Adventurous Beginnings** Color Photograph by Lisa Mohamed-Lowe



**Day-Night** Acrylic by Adela Szymanski

Scraping shadows  
by Grant Russell Clyman

*Shadows well in him  
Brightness from the blade  
He grips  
Tightly  
Shuns the darkness  
Biting back the demon's  
Grip  
Talon blackness scrape  
His soul in turmoil  
Ice pierces through agonized pores  
Out  
Down trembling  
Flesh pulses out  
The heart labors  
As blood mingles with sweat  
Through the (k)night  
He tears apart against the rages  
Not for himself  
He keeps his steel unstained  
Of innocent blood  
"...His blade defends the  
Helpless."*

## Measuring Longing

by Brandy Sejeck

*Tracing the nylon seam of her wrist,  
I measure longing.  
Each stitch embroiders the fastened lip  
of a great chasm.  
Each stitch, a separate purpose.*

*She says she laid her tendons in a row,  
three shriveled lupine stalks.  
It didn't even hurt.*

*I imagine my own wrist open,  
sinew bulging chrysanthemum fat,  
blood the consistency of boiled milk,  
the nettle sting of life spouting  
straight as a column,  
a small, red geyser.*

*I do not bypass even the tiniest kernel of pain;  
it rasps against my bones,  
deformed millstones  
that crackle with motion.  
I listen for a purpose,  
but the sound tapers to an emery scratch.*

*Quietly, I count stitches,  
fingers learning each knot,  
an illegible Braille,  
knowing they somehow link with life...  
they somehow link with longing.*



Pixie Trip Black Pen and Colored Pencil by Erin K. Hanna



Psssssssss

by Paris LaRue

*It doesn't strike me as an abnormality  
That you could skip all the formalities  
Isn't that a shame, you couldn't even ask me my name  
But before a sister gets past, you already got my ass—ets  
From A to Z  
Skipping B, C, D, E and pausing at G, stringing your chin, grinning your grin  
Scoping me out with X-ray vision eyes  
Not even your lethal inflictions of supernatural love addictions  
Can penetrate these kryptonite tight thighs  
So Brother please don't assume—because yes I'm immune  
To your game and childish lies  
I guess what I'm trying to say  
Is that I'm not your average chic from around the way  
Not just another quick lay  
See the wine that drips from these vines will blow you— like out of your mind  
Nah.... my name isn't sunshine  
See I am more like an alkaline...battery  
Throw me up in the air  
And I'll defy the laws of gravity  
Because knowledge goes on and on and on  
And ignorance doesn't like solitude, not trying to be rude  
But right now you wouldn't be able to see me  
If you tracked my longitude and latitude  
So before you try approaching this chic  
Get a grip on astrophysics  
Not to be unkind  
But right now you don't even make Stevie Wonder look blind  
Wait, before you proceed  
Remember a woman will have to one day carry your seed  
See we may be different entities  
But we both have something in common  
—We come from a people of stolen identities———  
Who had to sacrifice their R-E-S-P-E-C-T, just to be able to B-R-E-A-T-H-E  
So it's essential brother that you fulfill your potential  
Quit wasting time and try reading behind the fine lines  
You can start with introducing yourself  
Hey.... by the way...my name is Alaye'*



Bonaventure Cemetery B&W Photograph by Erika L. Watson

## Stale Bread

by Grant Clyman

*Compassion started out, the living word  
Started out genuine.  
Now made dead through stagnant tongues  
Pressed between pages  
Choked between two flaps of hide.  
You call this holy?*

*Claimers of the name  
You carry it like a bucket of paint  
Smearing the walls  
with his righteous blood.*

*I'd say look in the mirror  
But you wear your blindfolds too  
Thick*

*Still, you can see  
Stained glass window  
Well-dressed man behind the podium  
That dangling cross you wear around your  
neck.*

*Sundays I'd watch you choke  
On the seed of truth so desperately trying  
To plant itself within you  
But you spit it out not recognizing its sweet-  
ness.*

*Stop!  
These words were meant to give life  
You use them to take.*

*Don't you see?*

*When did your senses become so dull?*

*I watch as you slap him  
on a lunch box.  
No longer do you give his name freely  
No, now you sell it*

*Starving ears hunger  
Craving words that live.*

*You give stale bread.*



Untitled      Cut Paper by Lindsay Philbert

# From Right to Left

by Daniel W. Butler

*see you Do  
view? different A*

*perspective A  
own? your than Other*

*tilt Sideways  
down Upside  
self. Reverse*

*seen...are things How  
you? to important it Is  
own, your wield you If  
person? own your are you mean it Does  
fool? naïve a Or*

*comprehend? you can diversity much How  
important it Is  
way? different a see To  
less? care you could Or*

*swell, eyes your Do  
reveal? to start Or*

*others of understanding An  
tolerance A  
seem may that people For  
Stupid,  
Confused,  
Chaotic,  
Brutish,  
Eccentric,  
Temperamental,  
.....  
Misunderstood?*

*eyes? their through look to Try  
think, they do Why  
do? they like Act  
so doing By*

*view different the perhaps Than  
Will change your sight.  
Bring a different understanding  
Of others,  
And their perception.*

## Jack and Jill

by Michelle Becker

*Tangled gateway  
To one side stands me, Jill  
The other side - there you are - Jack  
There is no more water to carry  
and there are no more hills to run up  
We will not tumble down together  
We, us, together - partners in crime*

*You know it all, my patient scholar  
of how I tear myself into  
paper pieces of bone, flesh, blood  
The fear of you forgetting me  
like mothers who 'forget' newborns  
in garbage heaps and bathroom sinks  
I say how I can't be dear  
You, who have carried me over  
abusive quicksands and backstabbing moors  
I know...I do matter, to you at least  
but 'bitch' rings forever in my head*

*You see, the others among us  
have me locked in this cage  
A dancing bear who juggles emotions  
as broken baubles are thrown at me  
like jeering stones of mirth and fuel  
and I would go and do my banshee cry  
in the dark, too afraid of  
them seeing my tears and  
hearing my wild boar gasps  
A sick animal with lolling tongue  
Eyes of mucus fixed on nothing*

*Will our troubles be known  
but lost over the distance  
as you cross the state line?  
Will our words be lost in precious  
phone calls and short but sweet emails?  
Distance, the snake that will  
Swallow itself inside-out  
Inside-out to let the poison out*

*Not me and you  
I want this to last  
We, us, together - partners in crime  
Forgive me for my doubts  
Keep me in spirit my scholar  
You are one of the few, the proud  
My comrade in arms*



Pocahontas Graphite Drawing by Jennifer Duncan

## *P'an Ku Staff*

*Editor - Michelle Becker*

*Brandy Sejeck, Rebekah D. Fowler, Alexis Cohen,  
Daniel W. Butler, Sandra Urquhart, Lisa Mohamed*

*Advisor - Dr. Patrick Ellingham*

## *Special Thanks To:*

*Charlie Lyle, Elisa Albo, Vicki Hendricks, Dr. Larry A. McFarlane*

*Every great work of art has two faces, one toward its own time and one toward the future, toward eternity.*

*- Daniel Barenboim*

*People remain what they are even if their faces fall apart.*

*- Bertolt Brecht*

*Faces, suddenly suspended above you; faces that you think it's your business to love if only you could remember their names.*

*- Anne Sexton*







*Pan Ku*  
*The Broward Community College*  
*Student Literary/Art Magazine*



*P'an Ku*





*Child violinist*

B&W photography by Amy Rodgers

# *P'an Ku Spring 2002*

## COVER

*Dreamland* by Andrea Kirsch

## POETRY

<i>Root, Leaf, and Seed</i> by Barbara Brinkmann	4
<i>A Crow at the Mall</i> by Justi Geiger	4
<i>Grandfever</i> by Raymond Gibson	6
<i>Planet Boy</i> by Alejandro Tuesta	9
<i>Not Your Hero</i> by Sean Sanchez	12
<i>A Man to a Gladiator</i> by Josef Alati	13
<i>Colorless</i> by Megan O'Riordan	15
<i>The King of Stars</i> by Michelle Becker	16
<i>Hold Her High</i> by Sandra Harnish	29
<i>I Heart You</i> by Joseph "Keenan" Smith	30
<i>A Rose from a Funeral Spray</i> by Brandy Sejeck	34
<i>Leaving a Picture</i> by Daniel Butler	42
<i>The Journey</i> by Joshua Farshid	43
<i>Perfect Dessert</i> by Alicia Gray	45
<i>Red Snow</i> by Diane Larson	46
<i>To Dance</i> by Kim Kopf	48
<i>5,280 ft</i> by Jimmie Ophelia Woods, Jr.	51
<i>Old Laundry</i> by Rebekah D. Fowler	57
<i>Pacific Waters</i> by Anavic Ibañez	58
<i>The End of Love</i> by Jeanneth Gomez	59
<i>The Art of Growth</i> by Alexis Cohen	63

## PROSE

<i>Curtains</i> by Rebekah D. Fowler	11
<i>Home Free</i> by Frances Weinstock	18
<i>Fridays aren't much better</i> by Michelle Becker	52

## ART

<i>Thanx Tiffany</i> by Anita Ardito	5
<i>Bob Marley</i> by Richard Grimes	8
<i>Sunflowers</i> by Carla Schuchman	14
<i>Form</i> by Ray Ward	28
<i>Waterfall</i> by Netty Rueda	47
<i>Decapitation of Life</i> by Deda Starling	49
<i>Strength</i> by Rebekah D. Fowler	57
<i>Nature at Work</i> by Richard Grimes	61
<i>Desires in Black and White</i> by Juan G. Herrera	62

## PHOTOGRAPHY

<i>Child violinist</i> by Amy Rodgers	1
<i>Pixie and her pet</i> by Amy Rodgers	10
<i>Self Portrait-Fantasy at Ft. Myers</i> by Dawn Hyden	17
<i>Untitled</i> by Catherine Y. Shuyama	32
<i>Untitled</i> by Anabelle Reta	33
<i>Untitled</i> by Theresa Neuman	35
<i>Untitled</i> by Lourdes A. Vasquez	41
<i>4 out of 5 Dentists Recommend</i> by B.L. Wells	44
<i>Untitled</i> by Paoulina Doukova	50
<i>Pillars of the Community</i> by B.L. Wells	60

## WRITES OF SPRING

<i>What Being an American Has Meant to Me</i> by Janet Castagna	36
<i>The New American's Way</i> by Napoleon Kernessant	38
<i>Patriotism for Sale</i> by Jillian Aldrich	40

Root, Leaf, and Seed  
by Barbara Brinkmann

Twines, heavy tendril  
Water, nutrition, life spring  
Earth anchor, true base.

Verdant fluttering sheaf  
Lime, avocado green, red  
Fall-nature's rhythm.

Pod, pit, kernel, seed  
Tiny new life-harbinger  
Back to earth, spring forth.

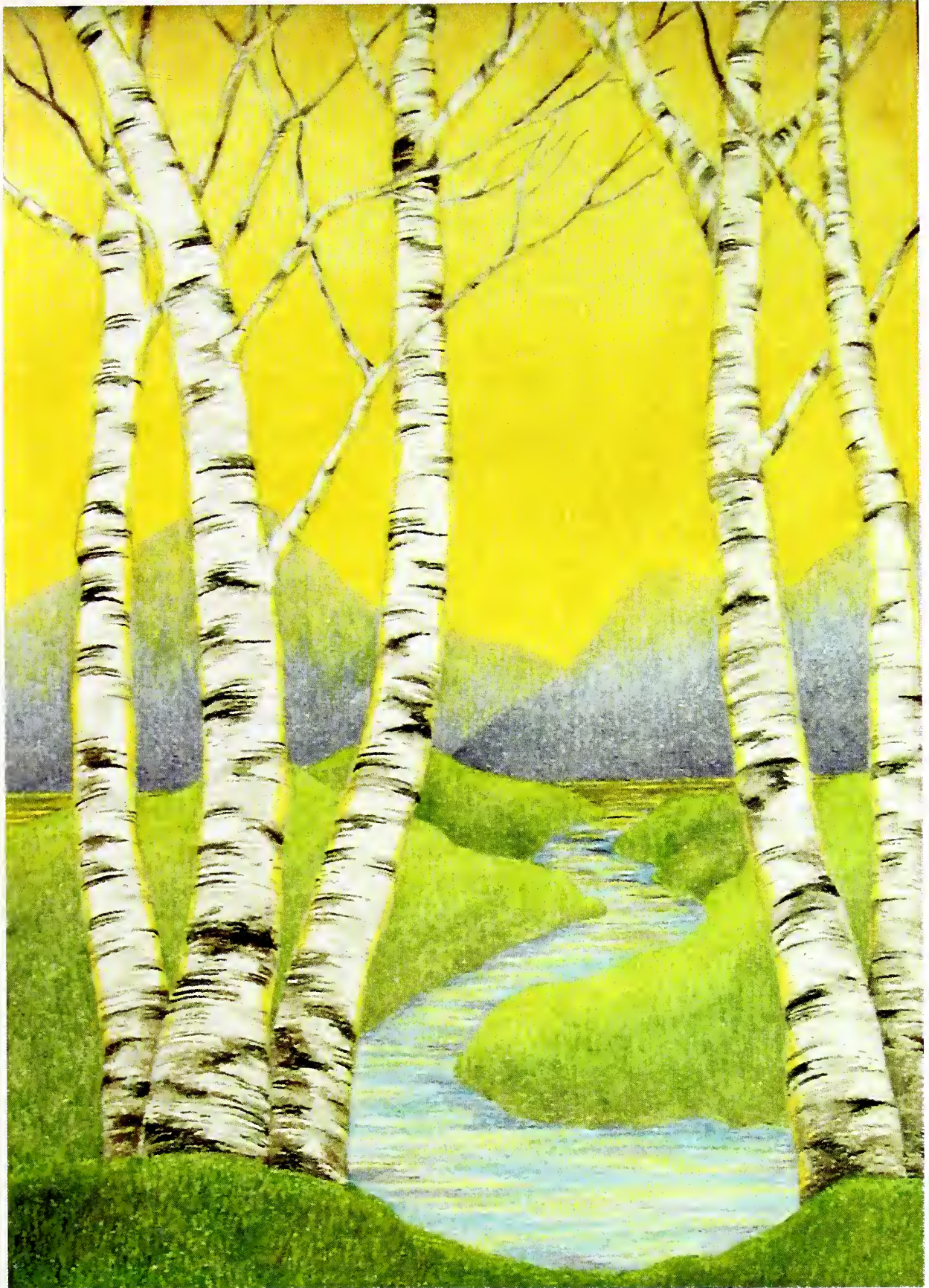
A Crow at the Mall  
by Justi Geiger

Black feathers glisten  
Morning sun illuminates  
Spreads its wings to fly

From green perch to air  
Arc above the world of stone  
Free in wind and sky

Cloud-blinded vision  
Now a place to rest on Earth  
Sleep in concrete-steel





*Thanx Tiffany*

Color pencil drawing by Anita Ardito

## Grandfever

by Raymond Gibson

Her lungs' phlegm-filled rote swells like  
squalls are not far off, the sky peeling  
the water in plashing curls for me. Breath  
and a fly strain a duet in the dim bedroom

thick with sweat, hot as mouths. The maleluca  
bark of her skin, the soft, pale forehead,  
flakes gently, every layer. Past the slick  
oil touch of fat and nickel taste of blood,

through the limestone globe's muffled crunch,  
humus—soot-black, redolent of blue-gray  
nail grit's soft grain—faint incense boring toward me,  
writhing around each clod the deeper I claw.

But I am at Mary Allen's bedside  
in Miramar, Broward County, Florida,  
twelve yards from the ficus I used to climb  
and the red vines my mother braided.

I never climbed that tree, not here inside this  
clenched fist of space. I'll dig to the centermost  
nerve, fall in her punctured chum-bucket mind,  
then we'll drown in sync, stiffen, and dry.

As the cracked keratin of each finger slices,  
the dirt's muscles slacken, sublimate into  
smoke black as a flame-cooked spoon. Cloud-wrapped  
cinders drift upward as I fall, sloughed memories:

Here she pins up the same white sheets on a warm March noon,  
turns, *There he is, there's my Sunshine*. And that mote—  
even further—*He spit up on himself*. Down, down into the  
dark neural roots, down to the invisible worm that tells me

I love her so much I'd be the first  
to snap her neck with my rough palms.  
The smoke parts like a stage curtain,  
and me in the chairless orchestra pit.

I can't breathe for so much air, its particles  
a solid crowd, an audience stacked in my lungs  
below scaffolds of ribs, spine, and tendons  
that snap by the cord and shrink to gristle.

Burnt fingers sharp like tines hook,  
crumble with a hiss and sulfur, singed  
hair, charred cattle smell. I feel  
every arthritic knuckle twitch like palpi.

Above, a skull dissevers at the fissures,  
blooms like a flower. Inside, stamens  
of dull red meld to fire.  
It sways, pivots on a brainstem wick.

It says *Wyrð bió ful aræd*, laughs once,  
then stutters out a shy cough. Shakes like  
a translucent-thin leaf in a hard gust,  
steadies, and burns straight and tall.

I try to grab it, snuff it like a candle flame, but  
I suck out through the ink drop pupil of her right eye,  
and float on the choppy waves of her blue-green iris  
as the fly hums her to sleep.



*Bob Marley*

Digital art by Richard Grimes

Planet Boy  
by Alejandro Tuesta

The police said it wasn't serious,  
but I knew it was  
"the house is on fire!!!"  
"the house is on fire!!!"  
the old lady yelled from inside...  
holding her cat with one hand,  
she waved the other hand for him to see her  
in between the flames and the blinding smoke...  
but she had no idea what she was in for.  
so he just laughed and ran  
with the match he used that night  
he lit other houses on fire  
and he just ran.  
again, the police said it wasn't serious.  
planet boy had done it again!  
one heartless night,  
a start for every other demand.  
the next night, a regretful planet boy  
asked God for a break  
a break from breathing.  
but God never answered...  
so he got up  
and lit more houses on fire.  
the same way every person lights this world on fire  
because they don't find any answers to live under.



*Pixie and her pet*

B&W photography by Amy Rodgers

## *Curtains*

by Rebekah D. Fowler

The stage told of its years by the musty smell of jazz shoes and sweat. There was new carpet, however, a heavy burgundy of soft shag. The lights were low, small samples of sun on an autumn afternoon.

Rehearsal. The flame was kindling within the lead eyes. Only soft. The chorus gathered behind, jagged pieces of thirsty oak ready to combust. I had already, several hours back, as the producer asked for more energy, and more dance, and more...

The floor, reflective ebony, distorted our images into sick imposters of humans. Cords and electrical lines fell in vines above our heads, gentle rushed listening intently. The words, timeless, were heard over the white noise of life. Soft whispers, giggles, the small crunch of pretzels being eaten, the beat of nervous hearts, feet fluttering across that impenetrable floor. These were the sounds of performance.

The faint perspiration occupied the molecules surrounding the actors like the blanketed South Florida air in mid-summer. The dancers stretched along a pale, dusty barre, toes stretched, gentle willow twigs. Torsos balanced in fluid motions. Their legs and fingers reached, thirsty plants towards one uniform sun, in time with the circling cosmos. I stood in back, trying to imitate that beauty.

The choreographer called our act with eyes bolted to his notes, a haughty melody gone flat (those half steps get you every time). We take our places; I stand mid-way (stage right). A line breaks the silence, forming a machete, finally breaking the last of my tension.

The music begins, and I turn my eyes on, a plastic light switch with its lettering long gone. My center leads, as I *pas de bourre*, faster and faster. Side-back-side (quick toes, now). A sulfurous charge fills the air, the oncoming storm brewing. Excitement taints my mouth,

a thick molasses. My arms rise, second position, and I *balance* with taut thighs, pointed toes, center forward, and a brilliant smile.

Creeks resonate from deep within the dark corners of the theatre—sounding from the deep, back horizon in back. My attention is pulled there, magnetized by that force. I concentrate, salty drops of sweat slide slowly down the sides of my face to the peaks of my lips. I taste them, ocean water. The other dancers do not sweat. Again, my green gaze follows the mysteries farthest from the stage.

Anything could thrive within those shadows, and that is what intrigues me. I dance faster with precision; dancing for the darkness. *Developpe* back—farther, I pop my head to the downbeat and turn into a frenzied pirouette: toe pointed and follow through. Old theatre ghosts whisper across the stage, taking forms of the somber glow from the dim stage lights. The halo reaches unsubstantially, the wavering sigh of the street lamp on 48<sup>th</sup> and Everett.

My pupils bloom, black orchids, as I try to focus on those far depths of cabalism. Yet, I dance—as I only know to do. Swift *rond de jambe*, and turn (the shadow appears all around), then finish—*arabesque!*

I wait, chest high, for the shadow to follow. One toe planted, deep into the ebony sea, the other high behind, an expansive oak branch. My head dips into the curtsy, following the liquid movement. Again I glance, depths that encircle the shallow fluorescent beam. A quiet applause to follow, the soft parade of rainfall: *reverence*.

Not Your Hero  
by Sean Sanchez

Not this time  
You've taken so much from me already

The last time I was in Montreal  
November 1997  
You rang the bell,  
told them I was a quitter,  
that I turned my back  
on the children who called me hero  
in a time of O.J. Simpson  
and Charles Manson  
You said the paycheck  
was more important

They spit on me  
when I come to their town,  
whether it's  
    Fargo,  
        Norfolk,  
            Charlotte

The blood spilled for  
their entertainment  
The nights away from my family  
You wiped their minds clean  
Anything I say—I try to explain  
falls on deaf ears

You tell me the bridge isn't burned  
I can be a role model again  
—Not this time—  
I'll leave them to their  
backward red ball caps  
and bleached blond hair

You can't have this hero back  
even with your billion dollars  
and corporate office in the  
shadow of New York City  
I've been down that road  
of hisses and boos  
for all my trouble



## A Man To A Gladiator

by Josef Alati

Staring in the face of death with another's man's eyes  
Seeing your smile glimmer off his lifeless light  
Dimly glowing in your heart of honor  
As his loyalty bleeds on your feet  
There was a moment where he waited for your words  
As they spoke his ultimate fate of demise  
His soul grew dark  
As yours grew strong  
The days that your thoughts pierced his mind  
As he fell to his knees and tears ran down his face  
His lonely desperate face  
His lost tired face  
He saw you in his dreams  
Waiting  
Watching  
For you to lay your hand of peace over his eyes  
But where peace died grew only blindness  
For his own  
Without his blood  
As he stepped into the field of dust  
He felt your presence of allegiance  
As you met his breath of royalty  
Before your dagger of loath pierced his vein of infidelity  
He saw the eyes of all that looked away  
His blood  
His friends  
For then he knew that the dust that lied beneath his eyes had blinded his soul  
Impaired his desire for freedom  
A word that hurt only the weak and grew in only the strong  
For when his knees cracked on the rocks that were created in your name  
His blood became yours  
And his name was forgotten  
In a land that bears love in 1 breath of faith  
His tears turned to dust  
And your eyes closed once more  
But never again would ours close to you.



*Sunflowers*

Pen and ink drawing by Carla Schuchman

## Colorless

by Megan O'Riordan

When passion surpasses the need to cry  
When hate drips dry the tears that were lies  
When a strike of pain hits my side  
When I see people watch others die

Ignorance results in confused hate  
Segregation by choice is society's fate  
Equality is pushed, politicians' de-bait.  
Yet so much disapproval when black and white date

Nation, calculation, compare and contrast  
Check here in order to gather the facts  
Unfair game, brutal honesty lacks  
Too much concern with white vs. black

Facade of diversity  
United by force, divided by equal opportunity  
Unlock with the key domestic tranquility  
And allow everyone to just be.

## The King of Stars

by Michelle Becker

The world is your castle in the clouds.  
A court of screeching, taunting jesters  
battle knights who fight in honor of your smile,  
the smile that goes with the enduring and unspoiled  
light that forms the pale infant of your eyes.  
The corridors echo with your hoarse cries of long ago,  
cries that paralyzed my fibers as you ran about lost.  
There were no mirrors that held my reflection.

Nothing can change you, you whom they tease  
because their veins are constricted by the poison  
of schoolyard ignorance and blindfolded doctors  
who say health is something that you are not,  
that no amount of science or miracles can cure you.  
The flesh and bones of your back tense and shudder,  
transforming and becoming the shell of an armadillo.  
I cover your huddled back as you hide under the ridges.  
Being told that you're special never gave you comfort.

Nothing can change you; you are the mortal angel.  
You are beautiful because your head is among the stars  
that delight in the company of the brightness of  
your wild, elfin face; the blush of your cheeks when  
you run around flying paper airplanes by the lake.  
No one can take that away from you or change you.  
No amount of name calls or shoves or teases will break you.  
The times when you were the freak show will not hold you back.  
The skinned hyenas who cackled "retard" at you are nothing.

Your head holds the galaxies of the cosmos that strive to shine,  
to live for billions of years. You know how to live, with your  
free laughter and sandcastle expertise, your frenzied hugs  
that are given simply because you want to give love.  
You are embraced because you want others to be as happy as you.  
You are more perfect than those who say you're sick, who say  
you will never understand because your handicap hinders you.  
You are salvation for so many; the peace for those who cannot see  
past the wars and massacres and hate crimes and prejudice.  
You are the world humanity prays; the paradise God  
has sought to create all along.



*Self Portrait - Fantasy at Ft. Myers*

B&W photography by Dawn Hyden

## *Home Free*

by Frances Weinstock

I had a thing for Dawn since she was fifteen. The guys hung around her. I wish I could be one of them; but I couldn't. Hell, I was twenty-four and a gardener knows his place. She'd help me weed and we'd talk. She had the cutest freckles on her nose, light-brown hair, and green eyes.

When she was sixteen, a big blonde guy started hanging around. The ape was bigger than me. He looked older than me - had a ponytail out of the seventies. Jesus! She was still a kid. I kept an eye on him. One day he pawed her and I lost it. He never saw it coming. I caught him off guard, decked him, and kept punching him. I'm not proud of it; but I'm a zombie when I lose it.

"Mike! Stop!" She ran to him.

"He's too old for you. Don't trust that dude."

She glared at me. "Leave him alone!" I backed off.

Her father should know about "*pony tail*." I knew he didn't like me, so I told her mother. She opened the back door and smiled at me. "Hi Mike, need something?"

"Well, not exactly, Mrs. Blount. I'm sorry to worry you; but..." I took a deep breath and started. "That blonde guy with the ponytail hit on your daughter."

Her smile died. "Justin? Are you sure of this?"

"I swear to you. He pawed her."

Her face got pale and she looked tired. "Thanks, Mike. I'll see that Martin hears of this."

I've done my duty; maybe they'd get rid of him. I went back to the tool shed for a trowel.

Blount sounded pissed. "Case! Come out here!" I went to the doorway. "Have you been spying on Dawn?"

"Sir, I wasn't spying. Someone has to

watch her." Shit! That came out wrong.

"You're out of line. We'll watch our daughter. Do what you're paid for or find the street!" He stomped off.

"Mike, you'll never win. Just split." It'd hurt to leave the gardens I'd babied nine years, but leaving Dawn hurt more. In my room over the garage, I stuffed my things into my backpack and took the first bus out of White Plains — last stop Forest Hills.

I rented a three-room apartment and got a crew job tending Forest Park. Now that's one big garden — five hundred and thirty-five acres. The crew and me kept busy. Off-hours I studied for my G.E.D. I wanted to be a cop. I hung out at the police precinct. Officers Pete Fenton and Joe Warrick became my buddies. Pete, the brother I never had, was in his early thirties, single, tall and blonde. Joe reminded me of my father. A widower, he was bald and built like a tank. They and I played racquetball Wednesday nights.

The park was prepped for Labor Day, August 1998. It was time to jog home. I couldn't believe my eyes. Dawn sat near the entrance, her backpack next to her. Her eyes were red and watery, like she'd been crying. My stomach took a flying leap. She was a woman now. My tongue tied up. "Dawn, remember me — Mike? It's been two years!"

She turned pale. "Oh my God! It is you! Don't tell them I'm here."

Her answer startled me. "What's wrong, Dawn?"

"I ran away from home."

My brain turned to mulch. What could I say? "When did you get in town?" I'm such a dummy!

"This morning." Her face screwed up. "My life is over, Mike. I'm pregnant."

I flinched. "Are you serious? Do your parents know?"

She sobbed, "I can't tell them. They'll hate me forever."

I felt clumsy. "Who..."

"Remember Justin? You punched him out. He's a lawyer now."

"Oh yeah, Justin." Figures. "When?"

"Last June, after my junior prom. We were going steady. He said he loved me, and if I loved him..." She covered her face. "We had sex in the back-seat of his car."

"That bastard knocked you up? That creep!" I said. "Sorry, I'm out of line."

"No, you're not; but I fell for it. It's my fault."

I sat down beside her. "Justin's to blame too, Dawn. He's the father."

"I told him I was pregnant, two weeks ago. He called me a stupid slut — said it was my fault. Mike, I know I was stupid, not taking the pill; but I'm not a slut! That was my first and only time.

"I let him do it. He told me to get an abortion; but I couldn't do that. He said he'd get in trouble, because I was underage. He beat me up and said to keep my mouth shut, or he'd kill me."

"That's a crime. He should be arrested. You gotta tell your parents."

"I can't, Mike. Last Tuesday, I turned eighteen, and my parents invited him to birthday dinner. He threatened me again that night. He scares me, Mike. I had to run away. What else could I do?"

I said, "Dawn, your parents will report him."

"You don't get it. Justin's family's powerful. They could ruin my father's business." She turned away. "Just leave me alone!"

I had to help — she couldn't stay in the park all night. "It's too dangerous here. Let me take you to Forest Hills Safe House — you'll

be safe there."

"No! They'll call my parents."

"They'll just tell them you're safe." I held out my hand.

She shook me off, put on her backpack, and stood up. "I've got to get going." It was getting dark. I couldn't let her split like that, could you? had to stop her.

"Come home with me, for now, till things work out,"

She looked uneasy.

"I promise, you can trust me." I picked up her backpack and we walked home to my apartment.

It was hard to keep my promise; but I did. She didn't need another guy mauling her. I let her use my bed. I took the sofa. I took good care of her — made sure she had plenty to eat — brought her to the clinic for an exam. I kept bugging her to call her parents; she wouldn't. I introduced her to Pete and Joe; they couldn't change her mind, either.

So things settled down. Dawn heated TV dinners, when I came home from work. I never cooked for myself, and she didn't know one end of a spatula from the other. She'd set the table with my good dishes; the ones that weren't paper. After dinner she washed the dishes and I dried, like we were married. We'd settle down in the front room and talk about the day — about anything. She said she missed her mom. Her dad had a heart attack last year. No shock there — his bad temper and all.

We got to be good friends. One night we finished the dishes. I plopped down on my easy chair. She took the sofa and stretched her legs across it, as usual. Dawn was starting to show — her belly getting round. Misting up, she said, "I was thinking about mom today. I really miss her."

"Dawn, pick up the phone and call them."

"I can't, Mike – Justin will know. I'm afraid."

It was sad — I got a lump in my throat. "God knows I understand — I miss my parents too."

"I'm sorry – both your parents are dead and I'm always babbling about myself." Dawn fixed the quilt across her legs and leaned back on a pillow. "Tell me about them."

"Dad's folks were sharecroppers in Western Tennessee. During the depression farm kids didn't get schooled much. He dropped out of fifth grade when his father died; worked the farm till he was twenty-five, when his mother died. He worked as a laborer – drifted north — took a room in New York City. He wanted to be a cop; but he had no diploma. So he started studying at night-school."

"When did they meet?"

"In 1970; she was a librarian. They fell in love and got married. Then I was born. He was out of work; they struggled a lot. My dad and me were pals — we talked about everything – I miss him."

"When did he die?"

"1983 ; he was fifty-five. He took a guard job at Attica Prison. I remember that night; mom was crying in their bedroom.

'Eve, we need the money and the pension's good. Give me ten good years to save some money – then we'll be home free.'

"At the train station mom tried to talk him out of it. 'Les, it's dangerous. You'll be killed.'

He hugged us, 'Don't worry, I'll see you soon.' I was twelve that year. There was a prison riot. Inmates took hostages. Eighteen other guards and him were killed. He shouldn't've took that job."

"I'm sorry. This must be painful for you. Let's take a break." She put water on to boil for tea — she won't drink coffee – I'm learning tea's not so bad. She put two Lipton tea bags in my mug – it tastes better dark –

poured boiling water over them to steep. She dropped a peppermint tea bag in her water. I dunked mine up and down.

"Do you want to go on?"

"I don't know – it hurts to think about it."

Dawn set down her tea. "You have to get it out — if it's too hard, just stop."

She was right — I needed to get it out — I went on. "Mom wasn't the same after dad died. Three years she struggled with bills. Finally she took a job in White Plains, where she grew up. I was fifteen when we moved. That's when I first worked for your dad. I earned a little mowing lawns after school. You must have been about six then."

"Yeah, I was a real brat – I used to love to pester you. You'd start up the mower and I'd scream like you were killing me." She giggled. "I think I had a crush on you." It helped to laugh.

"Mom said Dad would be proud at how much I helped. We talked every night before we turned in." I took a sip of tea. "Ow!" It scalded my tongue. "Being a widow was hard on mom — she was depressed a lot — had trouble sleeping. I'd hear her crying when she thought I was asleep. One night, when I was sixteen, she took too many sleeping pills." choked on my tea.

Dawn hugged me. "Don't say any more, for now. Hey! — the baby just kicked!" She put my hand on her belly. felt it move — it was amazing. We held hands that night, sitting close on the sofa. At bedtime she kissed my cheek, and went to bed. I didn't follow, as much as I wanted to. I loved her too much to lose her trust.

That was the last Friday in October. The next day after work I brought her pink roses. "Dawn, I love you — marry me — I'll take good care of you and the baby."

She smelled them and hugged me. "Mike, you've been a good friend — you taught me love isn't just sex. You said I could



trust you — and kept your word. I love you, too. Yes, I'll marry you."

On Sunday ten officers escorted us to Forest Park. Joe gave Dawn away and Pete was my best man. Dawn wore a white dress and held a bouquet of white roses. We stood under red and gold maples on a carpet of autumn leaves. After we said our vows, all the guys kissed the bride. That night we slept together for the first time. She was soft and young, but she made love like a woman.

One evening Dawn said, "We need a name for the baby." She drew a line down the middle of a piece of paper — wrote 'BOYS' on the left and 'GIRLS' on the right. We looked up baby names in a pocket book — wrote them down — tried one after another and picked 'Noah Adam' for a boy and 'Naomi Ann' for a girl.

I bugged her to call her parents. After all, they're the grandparents. The last day of November she phoned them. "Mom, it's Dawn. I'm calling from Forest Hills. Get Dad on the other line."

I could hear him yelling. "Why didn't you call? We've been worried sick!"

"Don't worry, I'm OK. I'm pregnant. Mike and I got married in October." Not a word about Justin. Jesus — they'd think I did this.

Her mom howled. "Baby."

Her dad shrieked, "Who the hell is Mike? Wait till I get my hands on that bum!"

Dawn was in tears when she hung up. "You should never have made me call."

"Oh! So now I'm the bad guy? Why didn't you tell them the whole truth? You said you would."

"I kept hearing Justin's threat."

"That's no excuse!"

"Give me time to get used to the idea, Mike."

"Oh for God's sake, Dawn, get real — you have to tell them!"

She ran into the bedroom and slammed

the door shut. That night I slept on the sofa.

The next morning Dawn said, "Dave, please forgive me? Dad said they'll drive up Saturday. I'll tell them then." We kissed and made up. I vacuumed and she fixed up the apartment real nice.

Saturday afternoon I saw their Lexus drive up. "Here they come." I went down to meet them. That was a big mistake.

"So you're Mike! I should have known she meant you, Case."

"Martin, don't start," begged Mrs. Blount. "Hello, Mike."

Just then, Dawn came down the stairs to meet them. Her dad's face turned all shades of purple. I can understand that. Jesus, by now she looked so ... pregnant! Her mom began to cry. Blount looked as if he'd like to wring my neck. She'd better tell them fast, or I was dead.

They all hugged, kissed, and cried — I wanted to cry, too — this was my family now. After that the four of us walked upstairs to our apartment. Her mom said, "Dawn, you shouldn't walk up these stairs in your condition. It's too dangerous."

Then, my stomach dropped down to my shoes. "Mom, don't worry. It's cool. I'm used to climbing these stairs. I've lived with Mike since August." Hoo Boy! Her mother almost fainted.

Her father charged me like a mad bull. "You son-of-a-bitch! I ought to throw you down the stairs!" Dawn had to put them straight, now — I mean, my life was about to be cut short.

Dawn screamed, "Daddy!"

Mrs. Blount grabbed his arm. "Martin — your heart!" He calmed down.

Upstairs in the living room we all sat on the sofa — me and Dawn held hands. Things were pretty tense. Blount did all the talking. I imagined him telling his wife, "Let me handle this, Clara." That's her mother's name. I felt bad for Clara Blount. I could see she had no

say.

He started. "You're a pervert — nothing but scum." The more he said, the more purple he got — temples throbbing — veins sticking out on his neck. I kept my cool and let him yell — no sense in talking — that'd only make him worse. He got up from the sofa and screamed in my face, "You've ruined my daughter's life. She could have married Justin — he's a lawyer — but a gardener's wife? I could kill you, Case."

"Martin! Calm down."

The neighbors would've called the cops, I'd bet; but Blount did first. He picked up the phone, dialed, and shouted, "Is this 911? I want to report a rape."

At this, Dawn blurted out, "Dad, Mike's not the father, it's Justin." Ahh...finally!

He didn't hear her. "Yes. My little girl's been raped." That got them here quick. You gotta say the right thing to get action.

Pete and Joe came. They looked surprised! But it was cool. They knew all about Justin.

"Officers," said Blount, "I want you to arrest this man. He assaulted my little girl."

"Yes Sir," Joe was real polite. "How old is your little girl, Sir?"

"Eighteen, but that's beside the point. He made her pregnant."

"She's not a minor at age eighteen, Sir, are you aware of that? She has to be under the age of eighteen to be a minor." I would've laughed, if it wasn't so sad.

"You don't get it, Officers," her father said. "She was sixteen when he gardened for us."

"Sir, did he assault her when she was sixteen?" asked Pete. I waited for the punch line.

"That's not what I meant. No telling how long she's lived with him. He made her pregnant."

"He didn't Daddy! Mike's not the

father."

"That man's a pervert and..." He stopped short. "What did you say?"

"I said, Mike's not my baby's father. Justin is." Dawn started to shake.

I was so proud of her I could've burst open. I wanted to hug and kiss her — I didn't — that would've spoiled the mood.

Her mother cried out. "Oh God. Justin? Poor Baby!" Blount threw a warning glare at his wife.

"We don't believe you. Justin's like a son to us — he'd never do that. You cheated on him!"

"Martin!" Mrs. Blount ran over and hugged her. "Your father didn't mean that, Baby."

Man! Blount didn't want the truth. He was out to get me. This was one crazy dude. Joe's look said, "Stay cool, man."

Pete got a chair. "Sir, please sit here — let your daughter talk."

Dawn looked frightened. "Justin and I had sex in the back seat of his car. He said he loved me." Her shoulders shook.

Her mother stroked her hair. "My poor Baby. Does he know you're pregnant?"

"I told him in August. That's when I found out. He said to get an abortion."

"He shouldn't have said that."

"Mom, I couldn't kill my baby. I told him I wouldn't."

"You did the right thing, Sweetheart."

"Clara! That's enough! This is all a bunch of garbage."

"Daddy! He beat me — said I was underage — said he'd kill me if I told."

Her father smirked. "Oh really! Why didn't you tell us when this happened?"

She sobbed so hard she hiccuped. "I was ashamed and scared — I had to run away."

Her father sneered. "I don't buy any of this." Then he turned to me. "How long have you and Dawn been having sex?"

"Daddy! Stop!" Justin got me pregnant last June after the prom. I'm five months pregnant. I didn't see Mike for two years."

"Don't lie to me!"

"I knew you'd take Justin's side, Daddy. You only care about your precious business. Mike's a good man – he's my husband and I love him." Dawn kissed me right in front of her parents.

Blount took her arm. "Honey, come home with us — a stranger shouldn't raise your baby."

I couldn't believe my ears. "What? I'm a stranger now?" I lost my head. I knew I shouldn't make it worse; but I freaked out. "Dawn! You've got to tell them. You're staying with me!"

"I beg your pardon, Case," said Blount. "Stand aside." He pulled her toward the front door. "We're taking our daughter home to White Plains."

"Mr. Blount, she's my wife! Let go of her!" I pulled her to me — he pulled back — a regular tug-of-war! Now I was crying. "She stays with me!"

Just then, Joe and Pete led me away from her to a corner. Joe said, "Get a hold, Mike! Stand back and let Dawn make up her own mind."

Pete said "Chill out, man! You can't force her."

My heart stuck in my throat – I prayed she'd choose me. Then I heard her say, "Mike's my husband — I'm staying with him."

I wanted to jump over the moon. Blount looked grim. His eyes glared hot as flame throwers — we could have used a fire extinguisher.

"Let's go." He pushed Mrs. Blount to the door, took out a roll of cash, and turned to Dawn. "Call if you need us — take this." She wouldn't take it.

Pete made us shake hands before the Blounts left. As they walked down the stairs, I heard Dawn's mom. "Martin, he seems like

a nice person – maybe it's true about Justin."

"Clara, butt out! I know what I'm doing. She's lying."

I was pissed. I slammed the front door shut and plopped on the sofa.

Dawn sat next to me. "I'm relieved. They know the truth, now."

"You think? Did you see him singe my eyebrows before they left? He didn't believe a word you said about Justin."

She laughed. "He's just being a father. Don't be mad."

I started to pace. "You were right — Justin is his favorite horse. He wants me to come in last."

"Mike, please don't do this. Didn't he shake hands with you? You're never satisfied."

"Pete made him. Dammit, you should've told them sooner." I felt like throwing up.

"Calm down, Honey. Tell me more about yourself." She poured some ginger ale into two plastic wineglasses — it fizzed like champagne — she gave me one. Dawn was trying so hard. She had a way of twisting me around her little finger. How could I stay mad at her? But we were too hot to settle anything, anyway.

"There's not a lot you don't know." I sipped my ginger ale, put down the glass, and closed my eyes. "After Mom overdosed, I had to fend for myself. I needed a place to stay. I couldn't live on mowing lawns, part time, so I dropped out of school. Your dad let me work full time for him — let me use the room over your garage."

"They left me alone a lot to run their print shop – I liked to talk to you."

"But I could tell he didn't want me near you — he'd glare at me, like he didn't trust me. Your dad scared me — he was nothing like mine. You grew up in front of my eyes — I think I first fell for you the day we talked about poetry. You recited a poem — remember? 'How Do I Love Thee? Let me

count the ways...’ ”

She grinned. “Of course – Browning’s always been my favorite.” She finished it. I took her in my arms and made love to her on the sofa. Afterwards we held hands and talked until midnight; but nothing was solved.

In early December with three months yet to go, Dawn kept bugging me to take her to the thrift store. “We need to look for baby furniture.” So we went. She picked out a nice used crib and dresser set. Both pieces were white with hand-painted teddy bears and rainbows. We bought the set for \$50 and brought it home. She scrubbed them down — I set them up. We put the crib near our bed, so we’d hear the baby crying. The dresser fit under the window. Dawn had fun playing house.

She was seven months pregnant in January. My buddies from the precinct gave her a baby shower in our apartment. What great guys! They brought potato chips, cokes, and a cake with chocolate icing. We ran out of places to set all their presents down. Dawn was like a little kid tearing off the wrapping paper. She squealed at the soft blankets, the tiny shirts and booties, the baby towels and washcloths. I’d never seen her so happy.

Dawn’s folks drove back to Forest Hills for the party. They brought a baby stroller, stayed an hour, and left. Her father glared at me every chance he got — but when they left, he smirked at me. That worried me – he was up to something — I had a bad feeling about it.

But this was Dawn’s night. I didn’t want to spoil it for her – so I didn’t tell her. The party was the boost she needed. After the guys left, she folded everything and put it all away in the dresser, beaming. “We need lots more.” She peeked inside the drawers again and again. That evening we slow-danced to Johnny Mathis on the radio and turned in early — like old married folks.

The end of January I passed my G.E.D.

and the Police Academy accepted me. I spun Dawn around and kissed her nose. “Class starts February 15th. The baby’s due in March. I’m going to be a cop soon.” That night it snowed pretty hard. I told Dawn, “I’d better turn in early. The jogging paths will need to be cleared. That’s cool – we can use the money. One day we’ll be home free.”

Dawn was still asleep when I left for work. Last night’s snow had drifted into mountains. It took hours to clear off the jogging paths. It was getting dark by the time I left the park – something felt wrong. I raced home, sprinted up the steps, and yanked the front door open. “Dawn!” She wasn’t in the living room or bedroom. The bathroom was empty — from the kitchen came a thump!

Dawn was sprawled on the floor out-cold – a big guy sat on her legs — his huge hands squeezed her throat. “Hey you!” I charged at him. “Let go!” His blonde ponytail looked familiar.

He turned, at the sound of my voice. There were scratches on his face. He snarled like an animal. “Who the fuck are you? Hey! I know who you are. You’re Blount’s piece of shit gardener.”

Jesus – it was Justin. I lost it. “You bastard! Get the hell off my wife!” I grabbed him by the shoulder and yanked him off her. I picked him up by his hair and threw him back on the floor. I grounded my fingers into his eyes, kicked him in the groin — grabbed him by the hair and dragged him out the back door. He kept trying to get up, like a robot, but I sat on him. I grabbed his ponytail and banged his head over and over on the concrete platform. I hoisted him up and pushed as hard as I could. He tried to catch his balance — toppled backwards. His body thumped down the stairs and landed in the alley. I hoped he was dead.

“Dawn!” I rushed back to the kitchen — her swollen belly was moving. “Oh my God, the baby.” I phoned the precinct – Pete

answered.

"Forest Hills Police, Precinct Seven."

My throat felt like sandpaper — I almost choked. "Pete, this is Mike. Come quick!"

"Mike! What's wrong?"

"I just got home from work. Dawn's out cold — she got beat-up pretty bad — I swear the guy was trying to kill her. For God's sake, Pete, send help."

"Should I call her parents, or will you?"

"You'd do better it, Pete."

Back in the kitchen she hadn't moved. "Can you hear me, Sweetheart? Pete's sending help."

Time crawled like a snail. Sirens — I looked out the front window — a rescue truck pulled into the parking lot — a police car pulled in next to it. Two attendants, a husky blonde woman wearing a shoulder bag and a muscular guy with a black mustache, stepped from the vehicle. They took a rolling stretcher from the back. Pete and Joe climbed out of the police car — they led the attendants up the stairs to our apartment. I opened the front door and took them to the kitchen, where Dawn lay.

The woman asked, "What happened here? Who did this?"

"I got home from work. A guy was trying to strangle her."

They checked her out. "Her pressure's low — we've got to get her to the hospital." They lifted her gently to the stretcher and strapped her in.

The man said to the woman, "Ready? Let's go!"

I kissed Dawn. "I love you. Hang on, Honey, you're going to be Ok."

We followed the stretcher down the stairs. More police cars pulled into the parking lot. I told them what happened and described Justin. "I pushed him down the stairs. He's out cold in the alley." They hurried to the back.

The ambulance had left already. I rode

with Pete and Joe — blue and red lights flashed — their sirens wailed. It was rush hour — Joe zigzagged between lanes, caught up with the ambulance, and pulled ahead. We cut through traffic, like butter — they stayed on our tail.

I thought out loud. "Justin said he'd kill her — he damn near did — I hope I killed the..."

Pete broke in. "Mike, you'd better hope he's alive. Dawn needs you here, not in prison. Just pray he walked away." The police radio came to life. "That's Central," Pete signed in, said a few words, then signed off. "There were bloodstains in the alley — but Justin was gone — they've put out an APB on him. At least we know he's still alive." He asked, "By the way, Mike, how did he know where Dawn lives? Would she have called him?"

"You're right — how the hell did he know? Dawn wouldn't call him — she's scared to death of that bastard." All at once a light bulb went on in my head. It all fit into place. "Jesus! That's why Blount smirked at me. That's how he found her — her stupid father clued him in." A white-hot anger bubbled up in me. "He risked Dawn's life to get rid of me! I'm going to kill that dunce."

Joe said nothing, as he drove. But pulling into the emergency drive he parked and turned to me. "Cool it, man — sure you're pissed, but watch that temper. They're here — now let's get inside."

The attendants unloaded the stretcher. Double doors sprang open — a blast of hospital air. The emergency staff took over — transferred her to a gurney — wheeled her in. I ran to catch up.

"That's my wife — let me go in with her." My words came out thick as molasses.

"I'm sorry, but the doctor has to examine her first. A nurse took me by the hand. "Please have a seat." I yanked my hand away "You can't stop me!" I wanted to hit her.

Joe grabbed me by the arm. "Mike, this temper is what I'm talking about. Chill out.

We'll stay with you – we love her too." I wanted to bawl.

Emergency rooms are wild. Nurses rush around like mice. Babies scream. Kids play tag around the waiting room and mothers chew them out. Every minute the PA system pages a different doctor. Like I said — wild — like a freaking carnival.

I slumped in a chair and waited. Finally a woman in green scrubs came out. She shook my hand. "I'm Dr. Paine. I believe you're Dawn Case's husband."

"Yes, I'm Michael Case. Did my wife wake up? Can I see her yet?"

"No sir, I'm sorry. She's suffered a trauma to her head. I'm sending her up for a CAT scan."

"CAT scan?" I flipped out.

"She may be bleeding or have a blood clot. Please sign this surgical consent."

I grabbed the form. "What kind of surgery?" My signature wobbled. I handed it to her.

She folded the form. "That depends. There's no time to talk — I have to hurry."

"What about the baby?"

"The baby's fine – she's not in labor. There's a waiting room on the 10th floor. I'll keep you posted." If you'll excuse me – she disappeared into an elevator.

Pete and Joe rode up with me — the longest ride I ever took. We waited three long hours. I was pacing when Dr. Paine came in. "She's in recovery. The CAT scan found no clot; but there was bleeding. I cauterized the bleeders and she'll be fine. We'll bring her down when she's awake." She turned towards an elevator that was opening.

I heard Blount's voice before I saw him step out of the elevator. "Where's Dawn Case?" Dr. Paine talked briefly with them, pointed to the waiting room, and stepped into the elevator.

They looked relieved. I would've gone to them; but I heard him say, "Wait till I get

my hands on Case." Then he saw me. "You hurt her, Case! I'll kill you!" He ran at me and landed a punch.

A volcano erupted inside me — I swung at him — I wanted to kill him. Joe grabbed me. "Mike! Stop what you're about to do!" I took a deep breath and stopped.

Joe led Blount to the waiting room, sat him in a chair, and held him there a moment, then released his grip and said, "Sir, please wait with us. The doctor said she'd be awake soon. She'll tell us what happened."

"I didn't hurt Dawn, Mr. Blount."

"You're a liar!" he screamed, starting to stand up again.

Pete spoke softly. "Please sit down, Sir."

Blount sat down again, looking grim. Dawn's mom sat next to him and took his hand.

I tried again. "Mr. Blount, I love Dawn – I'd never hurt her. Justin tried to strangle her." He said nothing. Two hours passed and no one said a word.

"Ding." A light lit up — the elevator doors slid apart and out came a gurney, Dr. Paine walking beside it.

Dawn was propped up — her head was wrapped in gauze. We all jumped up and rushed to her side. She screwed up her face. "Mike, Justin tried to kill the baby and me. Don't let him hurt us."

I leaned down and kissed her. "I promise I won't."

Her dad had to know she wasn't lying — he was standing right behind me. I turned — his face had a look of surprise — eyes rolled back into his head. He grabbed his chest — his legs buckled.

"Martin!" Mrs. Blount tried to catch him, but missed, as he slid to the marble floor.

Dr. Paine was about to go to Dawn's room, but immediately went to his side. His color was a purplish-gray. She told the orderly, "He's having a heart attack. Get help, STAT." She started mouth to mouth. She stepped

aside, when the STAT team took over. She followed Dawn to her room.

I took my mother-in-law's hand. "He'll be OK." I didn't know what else to say. We all watched in silence. They lifted him to a gurney and wheeled him down the hall.

Mrs. Blount hugged me. "Please forgive him, Mike. He's really a good man." She hurried down the hall. It would take time...

"You controlled your temper. I'm proud of you." Joe shook my hand. "We have to go; but we'll be back, when our shift ends. Tell Dawn we love her."

Pete gave me a high five. "Give Dawn a kiss for us." I felt a lump in my throat.

Dr. Paine started toward Dawn's room. I went after her. "May I see my wife, now?"

"You can go in; but she needs to rest." Dawn was sleeping when I tiptoed in — she looked so peaceful. I kissed her forehead and sat near her bed.

I closed my eyes. What Joe said made sense — I have to watch my temper — mine's as bad as Blount's. Joe stopped me from doing something stupid. I could've killed both Justin and her dad.

Her dad loves her — I'm sure of that. I'll try again, visit him in the hospital, and get to know him. Maybe he'll learn to like me. Maybe, one day, our family will be Home Free.



Ray Ward '11

Form

Pencil drawing by Ray Ward



Hold Her High  
(Questions from a Hero's Grave)  
by Sandra Hamish

Oh say, does that star spangled banner yet stand  
Over a free and civilized land?  
Does it still stand for justice for one and for all,  
Or have they forgotten why heroes did fall?  
Oh say, does that star spangled banner still wave  
Over a nation which hasn't a slave?  
Do they still look upon her with tears in their eyes  
Or have they forgotten those first battle cries?  
Oh say, can you tell me what the colors now mean?  
Do they give her the honor that's due to a queen?  
Do they stand up and cheer her when she's carried by?  
And what are their feelings when they see her fly?

Oh say, does that star spangled banner yet stand  
Over the nation the way it was planned?  
Can you still see her flying wherever you go?  
When the children look to her, do their faces glow?  
Oh say, does that star spangled banner still wave  
Over the heroes who lie in the grave?  
And do they remember what she has withstood  
In protecting our nation so free and so good?  
Oh say can you tell me if you still hold her high?  
Is she still the most beautiful flag in the sky?  
Does she fly like an eagle and soar high above  
As a symbol of liberty, freedom, and love?

## I Heart You

by Joseph "Keenan" Smith

I was washing my face last night, and as I peered into the mirror...I saw the Virgin Mary  
She was starring at me vacantly, obviously mistaking me.....  
For someone I am not

She had the blackest hair, that seemed to engulf all the colors around it....  
With its lack of color....  
Its lack of fine line vertical symmetries....  
Its twisted, tangled, tormented twirls.....that curled tight to her divine image

She whispered three words that seemed to be  
transcendental interpretations of her life view...  
As she murmured... "I heart you"

She reached her hand out to touch me, but I don't accept hand outs...  
So I turned away  
Walking out of the bathroom, I knew that something horrible had happened  
The divine mother wanted to touch...ME...and I said no....

However, I didn't actually say "no"  
I assume my actions properly portrayed my ultimate intentions...  
Which were to break the mirror conspiracy, and pull her world into mine  
And, drink wine with Joseph and Jesus and Jolly old Saint Nick...  
And, dine on the flesh of her son...  
And, eat moon pies until the sun comes up, and detours me again from demise

I still despise the fact that I only see you while I am washing my face  
Our distance is irrelevant  
because we are no more close while together....  
Then we are while we're apart  
And, even if you tear apart my cardio vascular  
And, massive blood loss soon ensues....  
I know your final words to me would have to be..... "I heart you"  
You've never really understood my balance of codependency and independence  
My disorderly, unorthodox, undeniable charm...  
That drew you to my mirror

That drew your face on a thousand rust stained building walls....  
As water falls and drains down into the crowd of faithful followers  
Heeding your call, calling your name, naming the wall  
Walking away dissatisfied and dismayed  
From the lack of definition, to your outlined image

And, I try to imagine a world without mirrors  
Without the little things that seem to mean nothing...  
As if nothing made of matter really matters at all  
As if words are worthless, and actions speak louder than they really are

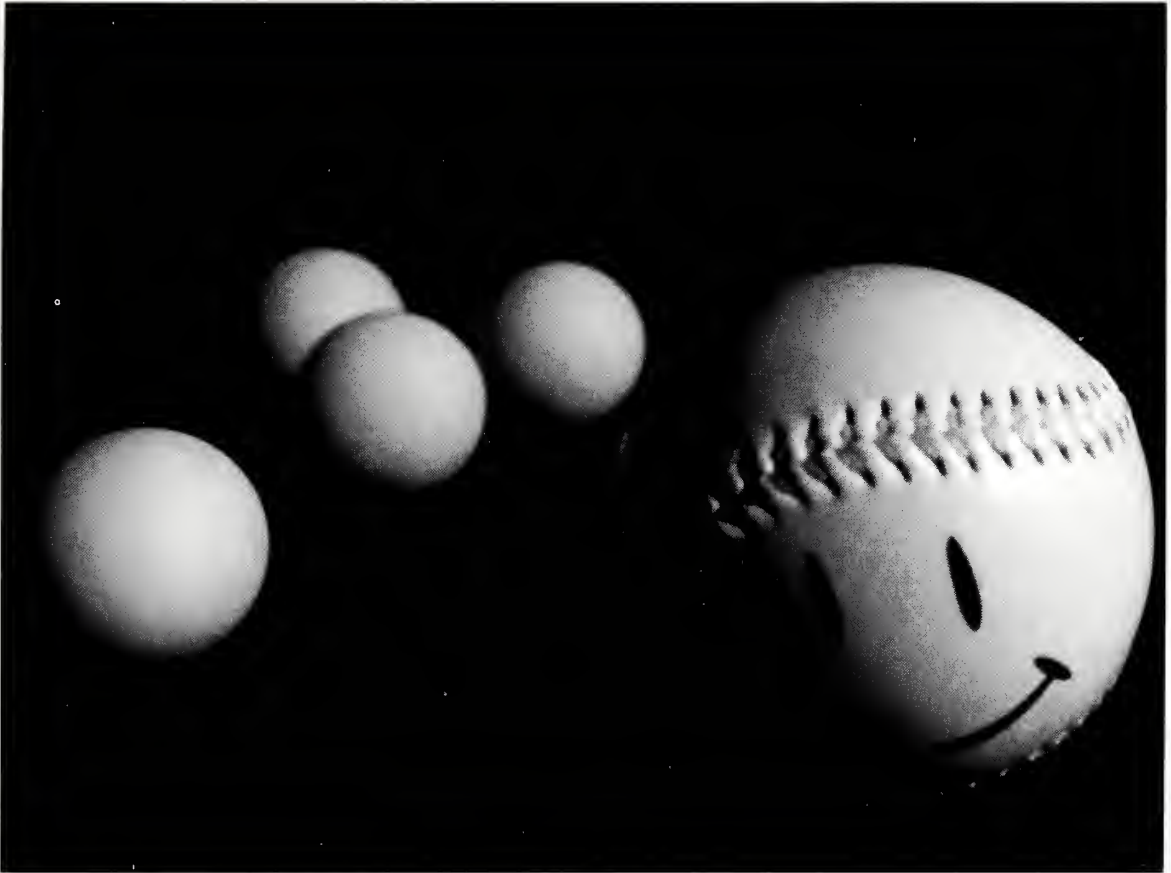
And, apparently fairy land is not that far way  
Only as far as the eye can see...  
And, I can see...  
that this daily dose of tap water baptism and razor blade repentance...  
Is too repetitive, and I am longing for change...  
Perhaps a change of mind will do for now

However if somehow, someway...you make it through the mirror  
And into my long dark hallway...  
Be sure the first thing you do is to say..... "I heart you"



*Untitled*

B&W photography by Catherine Y. Shuyama



*Untitled*

B&W photography by Anabelle Reta

A Rose From a Funeral Spray  
by Brandy Sejeck

4 a.m.--I waken  
to a spoiled rose. It lies  
on my desk, a bouquet  
of tongues--it's stem, a collapsed bone.  
For half a month it has slouched  
beneath van Gogh's bronzed beard  
like an inflamed bow tie or a throat  
hewn to petals.

Tonight, it smiles--  
six mouths, red and certain--  
at my terrible need  
to outlive it. I light the curdled wick  
of a candle; it stands  
half-kindled, half-cremated. The rose darkens;  
it is the color of marrow.

In a far corner, Renoir's *Caroline Rémy* studies  
the gauzy lips of the flower--  
Its slack fiber, its bruised crown.  
She compares it to the frill of poppies  
that garland her shoulder like a wound.  
I compare her to the *Mona Lisa*;  
each outlived her father.

The rose mutely witnesses--  
knows, in the pith of its petals, my future  
is to become the past  
like da Vinci's guttered cheek  
or my grandmother's spooled hair.

I want to bite its oracular bloom,  
taste it slide apart  
like boiled parchment.  
Instead, I cross it over a stale wedding rose--  
a black-finned crucifix--  
one rose a beginning...  
one rose, an end.



*Untitled*

B&W photography by Theresa Neuman

*What Being an American Has Meant to Me* by Janet Castagna

Since September 11th, people have really tried defining what being an American means. The definition of American in the dictionary simply states, "native or inhabitant of the United States," and "a citizen of the United States." If you ask most people, they'll tell you that it entitles them to a shot at the "American dream," regardless of religion, race, creed or sex. To me, it means freedom and hope. It means I can live a life I choose, rather than a life some communist government forces me to live. Recently, while I was skimming through a magazine, I came across an ad with a picture showing immigrants arriving at Ellis Island, seeing the Statue of Liberty for the first time. The caption read, "They gave up everything. Their families. Their friends. Their homes. The villages they were born in. They arrived with only the clothes on their backs. Vulnerable. Scared. But brimming with hope and determined that a better life was within their grasp." Through the years, many people have emigrated here from other countries because in the eyes of the world, America is known as the land of plenty. The Statue of Liberty is a symbol to many people in search of a better life. America has always been a melting pot of different people, traditions and ideas. We are black, white, red, yellow and brown. All of these things blended together shape and form each American. We are united by one common thread; we are Americans. The trials that we face together as a country makes us stronger each and every day. To me, even though I could live anywhere in the world, I choose to live here.

George Washington was quoted as saying, "The name American must always exalt the pride of patriotism." As a child, I wept when John F. Kennedy, Jr. saluted his father's passing casket on its way to Arlington Cemetery. More recently, I watched in horror with the world as many thousands of innocent

Americans were killed as two hijacked airplanes flew into the World Trade Towers. I worried for the President's safety when I heard that a third plane had flown into the Pentagon. I prayed for the lives lost on the fourth plane that crashed in Pennsylvania, as Americans overpowered their captors. I can't think of a better example of American pride or patriotism than the people on that plane. Everywhere, cars display flags and bumper stickers are emblazoned with flags. Many people now wear pins of our flag on a more regular basis. People are courteous, grateful, and more considerate of each other now. The Fire, Rescue and Police departments have come to be highly regarded for their integrity, bravery and courage in the line of duty. I think we take more time to acknowledge the difficulty and their efforts these days. United together, we now know the meaning of the phrase, "United we stand, divided we fall." It has been a long struggle for those who live in New York. They have gone through quite a transformation because of this. They are no longer known as people who look the other way when witnessing a crime. I asked a woman from the Bronx what her feelings were when she first heard the news. She told me that everyone was "terrified" and, "It's something you never get over." She also told me since that day she doesn't "go into Manhattan anymore." Another man I spoke with, who was visiting his relatives in New York at the time, told me that initially the sound of an airplane "flying overhead" bothered him. I am sure there are few people who will forget that day, as surreal as it seems to me still. As Americans, we mourned together. It's what Ernest Hemingway meant when he said, "The world is a fine place and worth fighting for." I'm sure the world he was referring to was America. In the 1700's, it meant being a part of the militia, a Minuteman. Now, servicemen who are loyal



# *wRites of Spring*

Americans are fighting for our freedom in other countries. They have gone to war so that we can be free. It means supporting whomever is in the White House, unconditionally. We aren't perfect, but we believe in this country and support our system of government. Being an American guarantees me freedom of expression, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion. In some countries, the government controls what is printed. In the United States, news is broadcasted twenty-four hours a day and our writers are not censored.

As a woman, I can seek medical attention without permission from my husband or the government. I can pursue a career, and have a family. I have the right to vote. I am not someone's possession; I am a human being with rights. This means I don't have to wear a veil or hide my face; I can dress however I choose to dress. I can drive and own a car. I am able to apply for credit and have my own checking account. I can work and demand equal pay. I stand when I sing, or hear the "Star Spangled Banner." To some, America means baseball, hot dogs and apple pie. To others, it means turkey and dressing on Thanksgiving Day with pumpkin pie for dessert. It means football, and "Made in America." It is Chevrolet, Ford, Chrysler, and Dodge. It's remembering to fly your flag, and light off fireworks on the Fourth of July. It's small children watching a parade. Although I was born in America, I have traveled extensively outside of the United States. We take many things for granted here. For example, did you know that most countries are lucky to have Coke or Pepsi? Here, you have about ten different cola products. Forget finding an RC cola in any other country. The same goes for snacks like potato chips or candy. I think we take for granted that you can just jump in your car and hit the drive-thru for an all-American burger any time we

feel like it. We have almost completely eradicated hunger in the United States. In fact, now we are faced with another dilemma; obesity. As my mother says, "It's better to have than to have not."

I remember when Hurricane Andrew blew through South Florida. My husband and I dropped provisions in the middle of a neighborhood that had been isolated because of fallen trees. We did it because that's what Americans do for each other. My mother was born in Canada, and she tells me with great pride of the day she became an American and was allowed to vote. That sentiment has remained with me all my life. I am glad I live in a country that cares about its people. I can't think of any place I'd rather live, can you?

THE WRITES OF SPRING  
1 ST PLACE - SHORT FICTION  
ROBERT MEEKER MEMORIAL  
WRITING CONTEST

The United States, a nation founded by decent people in quest of freedom, embodies a majority of individuals who cherish how the American Society has blossomed into a multicultural country. Within its borders, people of different religious beliefs, ethnic origins, and traditional values stand united under the same flag. Together, they elect people who share their vision of democracy, freedom of speech, prosperity, and justice for all. As a result, their leaders fight to maintain the American dream, while striving to export their revolutionary visions of peace to the countries that are swimming against the universal current of life. In light of these concepts, a Neo-American is a vessel through which the universal current of life flows.

In order for the emerging generation to appreciate the diversity that enriches the human society, they must be exposed at a young age to multicultural literature. Children everywhere yearn to see themselves in the stories they read. They long to see infants, whom they resemble, being depicted in truthful, positive ways that can help them build their self-esteem. After being exposed to such literature, they gain a foundation on which they can construct a solid edifice. Such a structure will be built within the love of what makes all people alike, cemented with the respect of what makes each group unique. To materialize the multicultural dream, they need to read such multicultural authors as Rudolfo Anaya and Edward Gonzales, Michelle Y. Green, Goseph Bruchac, and Almira Astudillo Gilles, who are all highly acclaimed, emerging children's authors. The young American who is raised in such an inspiring reading environment will, as an adult, voluntarily participate in activities that diminish racism by gravitating around all-inclusivism.

From the new generation of Americans should surface new political leaders whose two main worries will be

getting people to participate in the political engine while solving problems, proactively and reactively. First, the new political leaders must feel empathy for the people they are representing. Since Americans are individuals who want to be strong abroad while having a government that is off their backs at home. Next they should use this collective desire to be perceived as a great nation to teach Americans: in order for the governmental engine to be mighty, it can not operate without the fuel of its taxpayers. If the nation, as a whole, shows intense interest and concern in the decisions that their leaders are making on their behalf, they would make more significant decisions. Along this line of reasoning, not only would they make more solid decisions, they would also try to predict upcoming problems and their respective possible solutions, in order to keep Americans happy and the economy healthy while maintaining the American image.

At the core of this new socio-political environment will blossom individuals who respect and value themselves, individual human rights, and universal jurisdiction. In that ideal period, the current adults will be—in majority—individuals who grew up in a multicultural environment that taught them: the value of people does not depend on their gender, color, ethnic origin, or economical situation. As a result, Americans will accept themselves in their totality. Therefore, it will become increasingly easier for them to expend their love/acceptance onto others. By doing so, they will be respecting the essential rights of everyone. Yet, it is not enough to acknowledge everyone's respective rights; they should be willing—as well—to stand-up against all forms of physical and/or psychological violation of human rights. By engaging in this noble activity, they will be upholding and honoring their legacy of the principles that are embodied in their constitution's Bill of Rights. Finally, as members of the international

# *writes of Spring*

community, it is every Americans duty to demand the prosecution of any offenders of the universal jurisdiction law.

As Americans realize that in order to accept others they must first be in communion with themselves; for politicians to represent accurately a nation, they must rise from the heart of the people they are representing. Before protesting that their fundamental rights are being violated, they must make sure that they are not encroaching on anyone else's. An American is an individual who realizes his place, his importance in the human society. He knows his rights; he executes his duties. Individually, they fall into any conventional ethnic, religious, or cultural category; however, when they gather under the same flag, they give birth to a nation that is a positive role model for the rest of the world.

THE WRITES OF SPRING  
1ST PLACE- ESSAY  
ROBERT MEEKER MEMORIAL  
WRITING CONTEST



Patriotism For Sale  
by Jillian Aldrich

*writes of Spring*

Come on folks!  
For a free New York mug!  
Just five bucks, makes it all yours-  
A hardly rare Afghan slug!

What a deal! Only a few thousand pennies-  
To fly an authentic U.S. flag!  
It tatters and dirties-  
No flame necessary-  
It instantly converts into a rug!

Two-dollar car magnets-  
And five-cent stickers,  
Don't forget to grab-  
Some Flag-time-tock-tickers!

Be an American!  
Show your national pride!  
Wearing star-spangled pants,-  
It's sure hard to hide!

Sport the I Love NY, chic, and Pentagon shirt-  
Over a red-and-white striped, pleated-shirt.  
Contemporary, and classic: Red, white, and blue.  
Buy each color in a different style shoe.

Terrorize austere fashion;-  
Strut the Fab Fatigues of War  
Nationalism is so very vogue-  
SelfWorth now sold in stores!

This Enterprise of Freedom-  
Is: Ts, mats and glitter.  
Patriotism gleams green-  
As flags fade to flutter.

Simply flip the glass-  
To dilute the past!  
Yesterday's pain-  
Is today's profit gain!

Use it! Abuse it!  
Guaranteed not to fade.  
Receive a free can of Redemption-  
If you call today!

But Citizenship Chips-  
From Bandwagon U.S.A  
If you don't like the tase-  
Just throw `em away.

THE WRITES OF SPRING  
1ST PLACE-POEM  
ROBERT MEEKER MEMORIAL  
WRITING CONTEST



*Untitled*

B&W photography by Lourdes A. Vasquez

Leaving a Picture  
by Daniel Butler

I

After walking outside,  
I would watch my father  
trimming the trees,  
and the hedges.

It always brought a smile to my face,  
to see him toiling so hard  
just to cut a few leaves from our bushes.

He would always give a slight chuckle  
when I would yell out:  
"Hey mom, dad's leaving!"

Mother would never understand,  
but my dad would continue  
to smile as more leaves fell to the ground.

II

At night,  
I could always hear my parent's voices.

I would hold my care bear, Lucky,  
knowing that if I was awake, then he must be  
awake too.

Always a smash, or a shatter,  
like when my Lincoln-Log house would crumble  
into a pile of rubble.

My bottom lip would get sore from being crushed  
under my teeth.

III

I just finished building the roof!  
But I forgot to put in a door.

My mother calls out:  
"Where's your father?"  
Laughingly I would yell back:  
"Dad's leaving!"

Then mom asks where he's going.  
I stood up,  
my feet smashing,  
shattering the Lincoln-Log house,  
and I would say:  
"I don't know,  
but he's already past the hedges,"

and that's where he stood.  
Always on the outside.  
Always leaving.

The Journey  
by Joshua Farshid

As we drive on along the back road,  
The mountains rise behind us in beauty,  
The snow upon the fields glistens as crystal,  
Reflects the sun that blinds us,  
And has led us through many miles,  
Hand in hand together, hearts as one  
We've traveled through the nice days,  
And through the stormy weather,  
The long roads were so rocky,  
From all the troubled times,  
We hold each other tightly,  
As the car begins to rattle,  
We end up in a ditch,  
But lucky to be alive,  
Our love for one another,  
Is now impossible to hide...



4 out of 5 Dentists Recommend

B&W photography by B.L. Wells



Perfect Dessert  
by Alicia Gray

As an open wound I lay here  
For all filth and disease-

I've done what I have run from,  
I've cut myself off at the knees.

For I am me, or she, or he, a baker  
So what's done with my power?

A precious stone, standing alone or  
A beautiful looking flower.

A voice so fine and clear as day but  
In the confines of my mind-

Is it such a task, again I ask,  
To have all ingredients combined?

Is it such a task, again I ask,  
To know what's in this cake?

For I can splice, and respice  
To assure a taste they'll take.

But again I query the baker,  
The one who's hand grasps the bowl-

For you may not choose what's inside,  
But the flavor's your control.

Exposed, a wound I lie,  
Although specifically I hide-

To show it all, the cake would fall,  
And cause their hunger to subside.

## Red Snow

by Diane Larson

Battle of the Bulge - like an aneurysm it bursts  
to squirt sweet blood over white sheets of snow  
in the Ardennes Forest, December 1944, round  
after round of bursting artillery shells, deafening,  
incessant front line on fire in a battlefield more red  
than white. Cemetery crews hurry to collect and  
stack the dead like cordwood in a shed, without  
ceremony or body bags. GI's wrap in olive drab,  
huddle together to grab moments of broken sleep -  
the battle burns all around, but there's no warmth.  
They march past what's left of the dead, no stench,  
frozen, crumpled bodies, open, gaping wounds,  
armies in combat, hungry, dirty, cold soldiers  
in a war fought by young, worn-out soldiers.



*Waterfall*

B&W paper by Netty Rueda

To Dance  
by Kim Kopf

Shoes are like sailboats.  
Feet slip into hulls.  
Lace up the rigging;  
excursion begins.

To dance is to sail; shuffle flap

First mate is chosen  
and “anchors away.”  
A party cruise to  
nowhere, a joy ride...

To dance is to sail; shuffle flap

The shoes glide and float  
on gleaming surface.  
Music blows the sails  
in this way, and that...

To dance is to sail; shuffle flap

The Spectators awe  
transported by grace,  
perfection, beauty.  
“Take me with you,too.”

Shuffle flap, shuffle flap, flap flap



*Decapitation of Life*

Paper and marker by Deda Starling



*Untitled*

B&W photography by Paolina Doukova

5,280 feet

by Jimmie Ophelia Woods, Jr.

you  
don't want to walk a mile in my shoes  
not a half-mile  
not a quarter-mile  
not seven-tenths  
not an inch  
your feet would bleed  
turn bandages red  
and wet the weeds  
and come loose  
and trip you  
before one step  
in my shoes  
my black shoes  
so worn terrible thin  
out of style  
this season  
your feet would bleed  
and blister and burn and whine  
I'd be so kind take my moonshine  
you wouldn't need a shoeshine  
to walk a dusty mile  
to not get hired  
to not get interviewed  
too often  
in my shoes  
my black shoes  
don't tie the laces tight  
I wouldn't either  
Herculean feat  
but I have to walk those 5,280 feet  
in my shoes  
in neighborhoods with  
no reservation, no menu  
no waiter, no service  
but bus service  
late service  
early in the morning

## *Fridays aren't much better*

by Michelle Becker

"Look at her, dude. She's...all zombie-like. Carrie, how much sleep did you get last night? You didn't wet the bed again, did ya?"

I was sitting in the computer lab, staring at my screen as if it had grown a head and started talking to me. I looked up at the voice that had startled me, grimacing because there was only one person I knew who cracked bedwetting jokes at me.

Brandon was smiling down at me, his messy brown hair hanging a bit over his forehead and curling about his neck. His hair wasn't really long; it grazed the back of his neck and stopped there. Still, it was in need of a trim and some styling. Brandon showered everyday; he had good hygiene. He just didn't bother with a comb.

Freddy, the "dude" Brandon who had been talking to, just smiled at me, his freckled face crinkling slightly at the mouth and forehead.

"You finished the lab?" he asked softly.

I laughed, and that was my answer to him. He smiled and shook his head.

"That was my reaction when I got the paper," he told me as he made his way to the other end of the room.

Brandon grabbed a seat and squeezed in next to me at the desk, putting an arm around my shoulders. His black trenchcoat hid part of his red t-shirt, which read, "What did you fuck up today?" He smelled strongly of Irish Spring and Drakkor. Drakkor was the only cologne he owned. Up until he met me, he had never bothered or cared for how he smelled.

"My nose is the only damn nose that matters," he had said.

"I stopped wetting the bed when I was sixteen, you know that," I joked dryly.

Brandon let out a short bark of laughter, quickly smoothing out his face to look blankly at the people who turned in their seats to glare at us. "No more Pampers for you, eh Hoochie?" Hoochie was his "endearing" nickname for me.

"Scamper away, Scumbag." Need I

explain Scumbag? "Ugh, We got a meeting today. Better prepare myself to be miserly and nasty."

Brandon chuckled. "You're stressed out and ticked off, you have a right to want to bash some brains in."

I smiled. "Wednesdays suck. I want it to be Friday."

"Fridays aren't much better," Brandon said, tugging gently at my hair.

I knew he was right on that one.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Hey guys, we got a meeting." Brandon was sitting Indian style on one of the desks, drawing on his skateboard. He had a set of permanent markers by his left thigh. "And when we got a meeting, that means you gotta chill and let Carrie speak."

That earned us some stares from the staff. We had our film club meetings every Wednesday, and the majority of the group didn't like Brandon, mainly because he got a tad on the offensive when he knew I was getting frustrated with them. But he kept me from chucking darts at them and throwing myself off the roof. Points for him.

Brandon had come in during my 'lone wolf' phase, which would still be my phase if he hadn't befriended me. Eventually the two of us started hanging out, and he seemed to genuinely like me. I could be myself around him. I didn't have that with anyone else. Everyone else seemed to have a 'problem' with me, and the problem was me. Usually the reason is because I did or said something wrong, or it's just something about me that is wrong. Is there such a thing as being semi-screwed up?

Physically, I am fine, but deep down I know I'm not. I owe that to the little voice inside my head and my gut feeling. It's hard to not listen to them; they're stronger than the voice of anyone I know. It's hard to figure out if I that mess me up, or all the stupid shit that happens in my life messes me up. Brandon knew something was up, but he didn't treat me like I was messed up. He was my only friend, and he treated me like he treated the



rest of his friends. He talked to me, called me when he could, and hung out with me when we both had free time. He liked for us to have fun together.

I told him that was why I didn't think anyone else was my friend, because no one else did those things with me. Maybe I ask for too much in a friend. Maybe I messed up somewhere to have them not want my company as much.

"They can shove my skateboard up their asses for all I care," Brandon had said, with no hint of amusement on his face.

Some of the staff left after the meeting; others went and started chatting with the advisor. I sat in my original spot, wanting to go over to them, but something told me that I wouldn't be welcomed over there. I had heard enough from some of them about how they felt about me. I didn't disgust them, but I annoyed them. In either case, I didn't want to be around them if I bugged them. Some people can be tough and not care what others think; I'm the total opposite. Wuss.

Maybe I whine too much.

Brandon tugged my arm. "Wanna hang tonight?" he asked gently.

I nodded. I felt grateful for Brandon. I know it sounds so trivial, but stupid shit like not being part of a crowd makes me so sad. Sometimes, I can't help but wonder why people don't want to be around me. When I can't find any answers, it hurts badly. Then I feel like I'll go nuts.

Brandon tapped my cheek. "Movie, grub, or barnyard porn?"

I laughed out loud at that. Everyone turned to look at me with wide eyes. I ignored them and walked out with Brandon. Not everyone had the peculiar sense of humor we did.

\*\*\*\*\*

Thursday turned out to be worse. It ended up being the straw that broke the camel's back. Yea, I was the camel. Duh.

My stepmother had offered to drive me to the campus, and that meant she was going to confront me about something. Chances are

it would be dealing with how limited my chances of survival in the world would be. My mind gets really fucked up over this stupid crap because I know I have my flaws, but...God damn, I'm not evil. I am so tired of hearing about how bad I was. For once, can I just be commented on something that was good, or even decent, about me? It's really hard to find myself when I'm so damn confused.

I don't tend to make a lot of sense.

"I don't see why you don't want to go to an out-of-state college next year," my stepmother began.

She wanted me out of the house. I know somewhere in her heart my stepmother loves me, but she never really accepted me as her child. When she introduces me to people, I am her stepdaughter. Yes, she was a lot harder on me than the two boys her and my dad shared. This isn't anything new to most step kids.

"I really want to stay around for a couple more years; I want to be around for the boys when they get to high school," I said quietly.

"You're not going to get anywhere if you stay with us forever, Carrie. I mean, you're twenty-years-old, and you're still living with your family."

I blinked at that. Being a twenty-year-old college student living with her family was a bad thing? I couldn't respond to that.

"Aren't you going to answer me?"

I shook my head.

"Now you're just being immature. God, I don't know how your father puts up with you."

Ok, I love my family, but...DAMN. Like I said before, I am always hearing about how bad I was.

I kept my mouth shut and let her bitch. I hopped out of the car as it was still moving, dashing into the library before my stepmother could yell out how irresponsible I was too. I ducked into the back restroom, tossed my backpack on the desk, and collapsed into tears. I've lost count of all my bad mornings.

\*\*\*\*\*

Friday night came, and I knew I had lost my mind.

The family had gone out to dinner; my father had told me I wasn't invited because of the 'bitch-fest' I started with my stepmother in the car yesterday. I turned my back on him and went to my room. I couldn't cry in front of my family.

I know it's nothing but dinner, but it was a lot more than that, trust me.

I didn't think about killing myself or fucking myself up. I didn't think about how stupid or selfish I was being. There were no neon signs glowing "BAD IDEA CARRIE" as I raided the cabinets for anything that I could pop into my mouth. I didn't even feel like it was me. I never did anything close to shoving handfuls of various pills into my mouth. Some little part of my brain had snapped and said "I cannot fucking keep crying and losing myself over this. I cannot keep feeling like I am not a part of anything. I cannot, will not." Thus, the pills.

I wasn't really sure what I had taken. There were three different bottles of aspirin around me, a TON of herbal and vitamin pills, and old medications. No one in the house ever threw out old medications. Yea, we're very responsible, huh?

The phone rang within five minutes of me swallowing somewhere between thirty to forty pills. I was on the floor of the living room within five feet of the phone, so I grabbed it cuz I couldn't think of what else to do. "Hello?"

"Yo Carrie, it's Friday night and I'm bored as hell." Brandon paused. "You ok?"

I shook my head, but I forgot that he couldn't see that. There were no tears coming, but I felt the fear coming over me slowly. "I fucked up, Brandon," I said, my voice shaky.

"What's wrong? What the fuck happened?" I heard the jingle over the phone. Brandon was grabbing his keys.

"I fucking swallowed half of the medicine cabinet, Brandon." I turned over onto my side and bawled. I wanted to die, and at the same time I hated myself for being so damn stupid. Deep down inside, I was in so much pain, and I was too weak to know what

to do about it.

"Fuck," Brandon swore softly. "How long ago?"

"Five minutes ago."

"I'm gone." I heard him running for the door. "Call 911." Then the line went dead.

I didn't call 911. Call the cops, have my family find out, stepmother goes nuts, Carrie gets locked up in cuckoo place. Right.

Brandon came ten minutes later, finding me leaning against the wall in the bathroom.

"I'm not calling the police. They'll hate me," I blurted out, and he knew I meant my family.

Brandon muttered a long line of curse words and dragged me over to the toilet. He was scared; I could tell because his hands were shaking. He didn't want to waste time arguing with me. "Throw them up," he ordered gently.

I shook my head. It wasn't that I didn't want to throw them up; I couldn't do it. I cried harder, pounding the toilet seat. I was scared now.

Brandon tucked my hair behind my ears. His other hand pushed into my mouth, the fingers stretching towards the back of my throat. Brandon had big hands, so having one of them in my mouth was enough to make me want to expel anything out.

I threw up once, but I knew that all the pills hadn't come out. Brandon had his mouth to my hair, murmuring something, fingers lodged back in my mouth, and I threw up two more times. Brandon's hand jerked out just as the vomit touched his fingers. He made no sound of disgust.

"Damn Carrie," he whispered.

I was still in tears. I couldn't explain why I did it. I couldn't tell him why I regretted it as soon as I did it. I couldn't understand the whole thing myself. I was terrified. For twenty-one years, I had been able to not go over the edge. I never fully dealt with all this shit, and yet I never even thought of ending my life until now. Fuck. I clapped my hands on my head and huddled up into a fetal position. This was the confirmation that something was terribly wrong, and I hadn't done shit to help matters. Brandon was the one who saved me, not myself.

I looked up at him. He was sitting with his back resting against the tub, his face pale and polished with cold sweat. For a long time we stared at each other. He pried into my mind and soul, seeing what was there; whatever was clear and bold and whatever was twisted beyond recognition. He then drew me to him, pressing my face to his shoulder, holding me against him until I could feel my heart beat against his, and it was then I fell asleep.

\*\*\*\*\*

We were in my bedroom when I woke up. Brandon was sitting on my bed with me curled up in a blanket against him. At first I was telling myself that I was dead. I thought I was having an out of body experience and seeing the dead me in Brandon's arms. But the vision went away, and I was staring at Brandon's shirt. This one was dark green with "God damn, don't read my shirt. Just keep walking." Sometimes I thought his shirts were so ingenious, he must have made them himself.

"What do I do now?" I wondered, pulling myself up and grabbing my head. I felt a bit groggy, but that was about it. No headaches or pains or "Oh my God I'm dying" sensations.

Brandon gave me a tired smile. "Want me to go tell mommy and daddy?"

The look on my face made him laugh, and I joined him. It helped me feel less stupid. Just a little less stupid.

Brandon must have read my mind. "That wasn't like you Carrie," he said softly.

"I know." I rubbed my eyes. "Something tells me that it won't happen again, but..."

"There was a time you said it would never happen, and yet it did tonight." He stared at me calmly, then his face lit up as he leaned forward to poke me. "This means I must go to new measures to keep you from cracking again."

"Like what?"

"Well, being your friend isn't enough. I think we need to have sex. Or, I can go to some freaky science lab and get shape-shifting abilities. Next time someone hurts you, I

simply change into a werewolf and eat them."

I laughed loudly at that. "You eating people. I'd love to see that."

"Carrie, who are you talking to?" It was my father on the other side of the locked door.

My body stopped working for a moment. The blood in my veins seemed to have frozen in flow, and my breathing had paused. My heart wasn't beating; for a brief second it felt as if the inside of my chest was hollow.

Another confirmation came, but it wasn't a terrifying one this time. It was quiet and still; a sliver of ice lodging into my heart and sending a chill to my brain. I was more messed up than I thought; I had known that deep down, but now it came to the surface. But there were no hysterics, no tears, no panic attacks.

Brandon simply disappeared. A pillow laid against the wall where he had been.

I looked to the door. "Sorry Dad, I'm on the phone. I'll keep it down." I was hoping my father didn't bother to see if I had the portable phone in my room.

My body resumed functioning, but the fear broke through and arrived. A completely new fear, the one that finally broke through my thoughts and told me I was truly alone.

Brandon never came back.

Old Laundry  
by Rebekah D. Fowler

your body was ocean-kissed  
last I saw  
and the lavish hues of passion  
colored the blue of your eyes.  
your rib cage spread, the  
broken-in catchers mitt  
of my searching palms unabashed pry.

you had held me desperately  
against the hours  
waxing as the Atlantic  
that writhes at high-tide.  
and I could only gather myself,  
scattered shards of stained-glass,  
and embed my melded tones  
within the strained flesh of your side.

I watched you watch me, a  
summer solstice in early May-  
your skin scoured mine  
for empty signs  
of spring's absent swan-song.  
you curled closer to empty yourself  
into the basin that I offered  
and I chose to bloom  
against your thighs  
and the seeds we fell among.

tendrils of hair, curled as  
an infants pruned fist,  
wrapped in shades of ebony sunburst  
as a sainted turban,  
while your tortured spine spun  
beneath my fingers tip;  
the coil and flow of the  
saurian's silver-tongue.

it was just sex;  
that I now see  
but you've hung me on the corded line  
scented with your seed,  
leaving me to fold my petals  
used, dried, and empty.



*Strength*

Watercolor by Rebekah D. Fowler

Pacific Waters  
by Anavic Ibañez

Sapphire tranquility sings the island  
people a lullaby,  
The jagged edges of the rocks,  
Embrace and yet,  
Breaks it into shattered colorless  
pieces...

The liquid mirror echoes the island's  
passion for God,  
Through reflecting sunbeams,  
Shines on each,  
And every pure wave that ruptures...

The cold, harsh warmness of it, feels  
safe,  
Protecting the island children,  
Tickling their bodies,  
With light droplets of refreshing  
wonder...

Mother Pacific blankets the isles of  
Peace,  
As, even the moon, awakes with the  
mountains,  
Green with spite,  
At the everlasting beauty of its sister...

Elegance manifested in its natural  
flowing form,  
Pacific Waters found no where else,  
Except in my heart,  
And in the depths of an island girl's  
soul...

The End of Love  
by Jeanneth Gomez

It is sad when life doesn't go the way you expect.  
Or when you fight with the person you most love.  
Why do I have to say sorry, when it wasn't my fault.

Why does he have to say words that conflict.  
Why does he have to yell; doesn't he know I'm scared.  
It is sad when life doesn't go the way you expect.

He is killing the love I have for him,  
doesn't he know I'm in pain.  
Why do I have to say sorry, when it wasn't my fault.

Forgive but never forget.  
Sticks and stones might hurt me; words and actions bruise and scar me.  
It is sad when life doesn't go the way you expect.

He thinks that I don't care, but  
if it was him or me I would give my life for him.  
Why do I have to say sorry, when it wasn't my fault.

Make him stop talking, doesn't he know he killed what we had.  
The dream I dreamt is gone.  
It is sad when life doesn't go the way you expect.  
Why do I have to say sorry, when it wasn't my fault.



*Pillars of the Community*

Color photography by B.L. Wells





*Nature at Work*

Digital Art by Richard Grimes



*Desires in Black and White*

Marker drawing by Juan G. Herrera

## The Art of Growth

by Alexis Cohen

I practice the art of growth  
tracing the palm of my hand,  
extended, arched lines, if time  
could be carved in form.  
Stretched pads that beat to  
my mother's womb, wanting  
air, wanting to be larger.  
Nails, oval shells that had  
been caked in dirt as my sister  
and I built earth pies full of  
earthworms that scrambled from  
six-year-old grasps. Fingers  
that clenched my father's leg as  
I sat on his shoe, a child cast,  
swinging to stay alive. Cupped  
palms catching tadpoles, tiny  
gods, in brown water full of  
birth, and death as the small frogs  
spilled from the glass I held.  
Sweaty palms when we first  
held hands and I wasn't the type  
of girl to go any farther.  
These hands that have gripped  
my mother as we battled waves and  
the sand no longer kissed my feet.  
I have also held fists with these hands,  
wanting to swing as I  
watched her stumble to bed  
and I have held my fingers, stretched,  
like a comb, wanting to touch her  
hair and tell her I still love her.  
I have held my hands heavenwards  
as his travel down my back and  
he cries about my skin, soft as a child's,  
the fingers open and exposed.

## P'AN KU STAFF

P  
I  
S  
P  
r  
i  
n  
g  
2  
0  
0  
2

Editor: Michelle Becker  
Brandy Sejeck  
Daniel Butler  
Sean Sanchez  
Sandra Urquhart  
Rebekah D. Fowler  
Alexis Cohen

Advisor: Dr. Patrick Ellingham

### SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Charles Lyle  
Elisa Albo  
Vicki Hendricks  
G.L. Sullivan  
Richard VomSaal

The Robert Meeker Memorial  
Writing Contest is funded  
through a bequest by Otto M.  
Burkhardt to the BCC  
Foundation.

*P'au Ku*, Volume thirty-three, number two, was printed by Ormont Graphics. *P'au Ku* is designed, produced, and edited solely by students at Broward Community College. All contributions in this issue are by students at BCC. This magazine is funded by the Student Activities Board. The opinions expressed are those of our contributors and do not necessarily represent those of the editors, faculty, staff, administrators or trustees of the college. Typed contributions with the name, social security number, and telephone number are welcomed from all students attending BCC. Copyright 2002 by Broward Community College, 225 East Las Olas Boulevard, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33301. All communications with the editors and all inquiries concerning this publication should be addressed to: Editor of *P'au Ku*, BCC South Campus, 7200 Pines Boulevard, Pembroke Pines, Florida 33024. Telephone: 954.201.8044. All copyrights revert back to the original artists and authors after publication. Visit *P'au Ku*'s website: <http://www.broward.cc.fl.us/locations/south/slife/panku/index.jsp>

Michelle  
v. Select  
1997



994 V2 P 159  
10/23/06 160679

**P'AN KU**  
**THE BROWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
**STUDENT LITERARY / ART MAGAZINE**













