

THE IDOL



THE IDOL

1997

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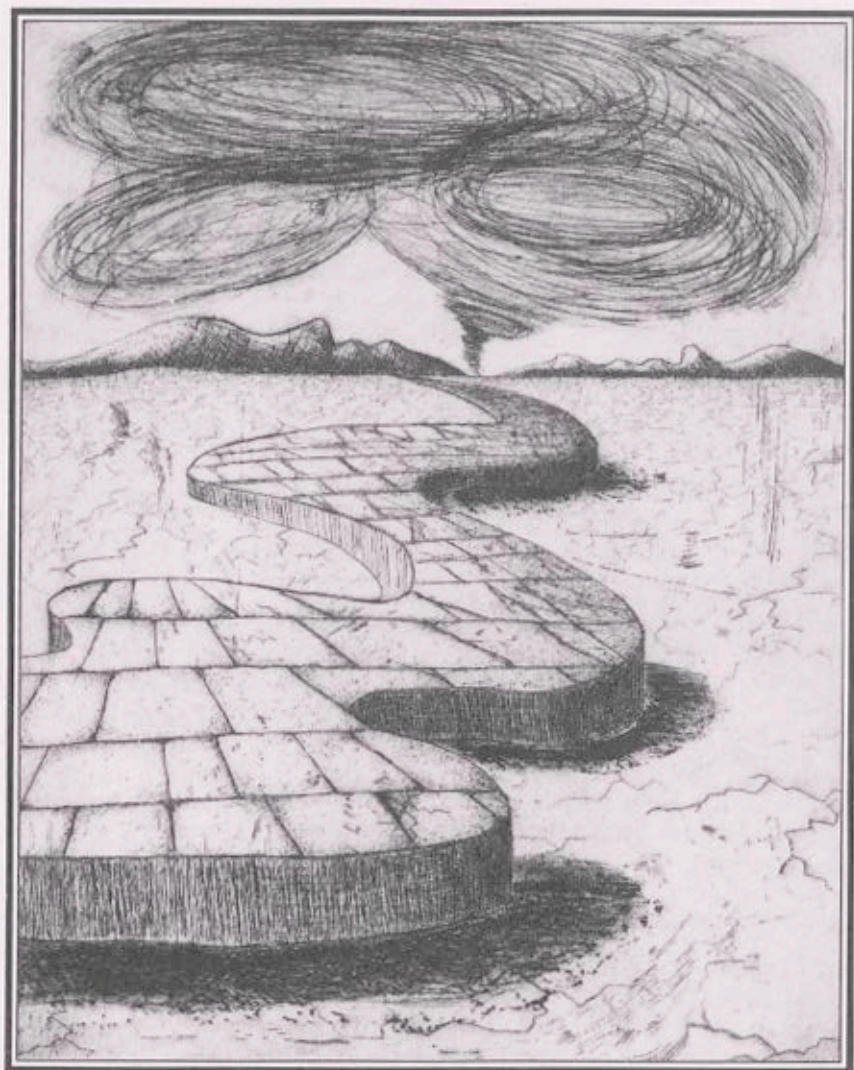
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SPECIAL THANKS TO
JORDAN SMITH • LEE ROSE • MARTIN BENJAMIN



A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Since 1928, The Idol literary and art magazine has featured creative works of literature and art by Union College students.

This 1997 year has been a particularly exciting year for us. The organization has expanded its vision by opening the magazine to faculty submissions, hosting a poetry reading by a published poet, instituting the Idol awards for the "Best Art Submission" and "Best Literary Submission," and hosting an unveiling reception for the artists and writers published in The Idol.

There were many internal changes to promote and support a progressive Idol organization. Some changes were: aggressive advertising, a central and permanent submissions box, reorganization of the administrative and editorial structure, and a new constitution which better provides for the magazine's expanding future. The publication has been improved by upgrading the cover and adding more art and literature. All of this could not have been done without the tremendous vision, dedication, and capability of this year's Idol members. Thank You.

We would like to thank those who submitted their work to this edition of The Idol. The response by artists and writers was nearly overwhelming! However, we reviewed every submission carefully through a process of author anonymity. The Idol awards were given to the two works that received the highest marks during the reviewing process.

We regret that we could not publish all of the outstanding submissions received. We encourage those authors we did not publish to submit their works in the future. We congratulate those authors who were published.

Again, we thank everyone who submitted.

Matthew Beebe
Editor-in-Chief



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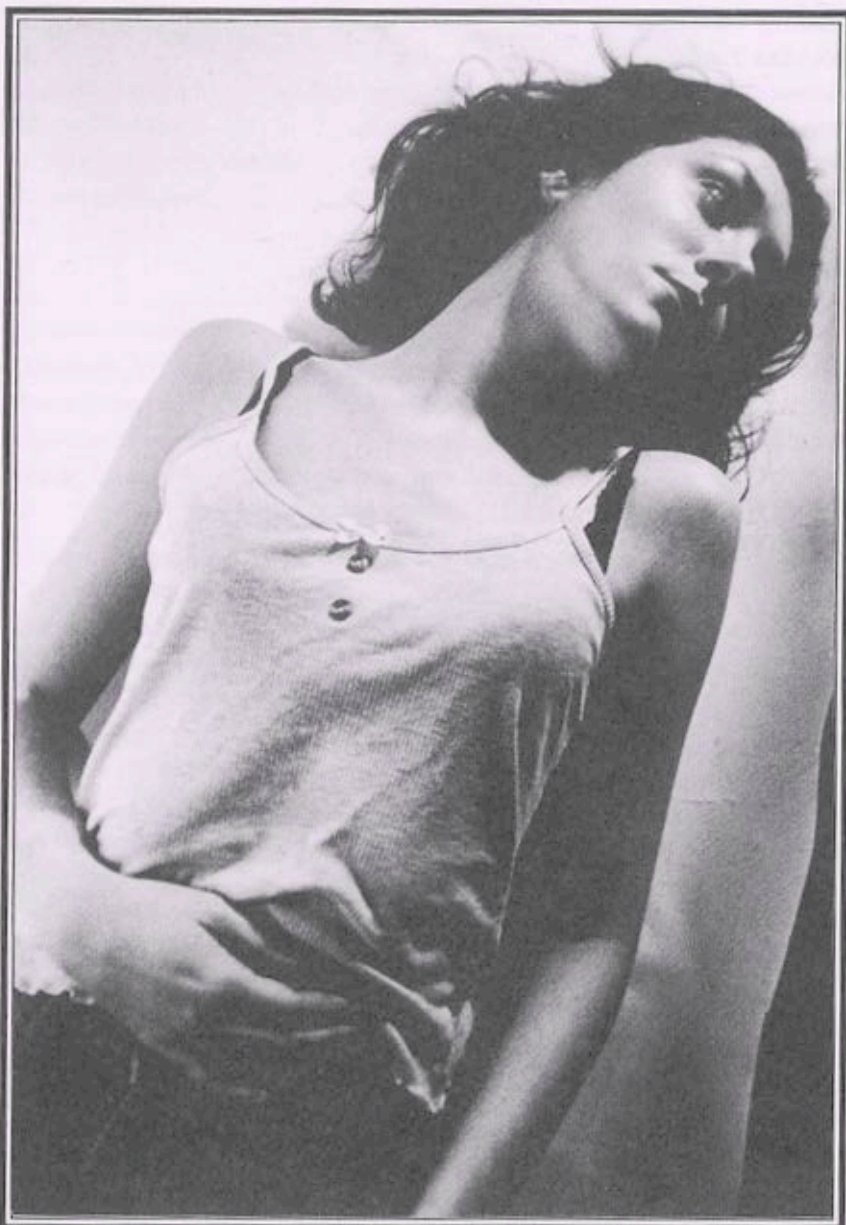
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CHRISTINE BOWER



THE IDOL



1997

LITERARY

PART I

One day
I decided to wrap myself in cellophane
so I could stay nice and fresh
like the vegetables in the refrigerator.

The task took a while,
but was well worth it
for when my lover came home
she commented upon my crunchy exterior
and fresh taste.

A far cry
from my previous
soggy
condition.

TOY BOX

Exhibitionist and kitten
Fall in, tumble in
Over piles of plastic and velvet
And a giggle escapes from the bottom...
Sad cow eyes drawn on a pixie doll,
Fix on a lollipop candy cane cross.
Kiss, kiss Ken and Barbie
Ken and Ken — where's your drag queen now?
A sigh emerges from the middle.
Fling in red vinyl cravings,
To land next to Curious George
And wrap baby tight in
Rock-a-bye erotica
To ward off the cold chill on top
Play time's over, and
Mom's in the bedroom,
So close the lid tightly . . .
Stuff it down, shove it deep
All in the box
Of Peter.

PEACE WITH W.B. YEATS

Your swans and roses
Danced whilst I dreamed.
A specter of books along
With sincerity that seemed
Insincere, somehow wrong.

As Guy Fawkes' ill fame came
I claimed your life no spoil.
Your sage's soul weary of dreams
Set you free of mortal coil.

I ask no pardon, Willie,
You straddled epochs,
Old and new with skill.
Thus, you know struggle
Of the greatest kind
And would not speak
To stained faith as mine.

Yet you smile, you smile
As we all sit here among
The specters of books while
You dance to Irish tongue
As Fand envelops you in
Her silver silence forever.

BROOKLYN

When we were warmest, the hissing of corduroy legs kissing one another as we crept closer to the raging rusted furnace with hot chocolate, shivering and grinning at the unexpected froth of marshmallow dribbling over, onto our bare hands. It was always orange there, flames tingeing the room with their dancing hues.

"A tree grows in Brooklyn," and I think I knew that tree, spoke to its flaking liver-spotted bark as its branches twisted around me, shielding me, hugging me. Leaves as big as my fist, brushing against smooth Brownstone, and I touched them from my rusty veranda, running my fingers over their soft white veins.

Metallic swish of my windbreaker, catching misty rain that promised a storm. Walking beside the shadow of a girl, walking a step behind her, catching her words with gusts of wind. The ground sparkled; it was the special kind of cement, black with grains of pulverized shiny stuff that glittered at night, glittered when you walked over them. I told her they were little mirrors, reflecting parts of me as I crushed them under my thick soles.

Race of vinyl as jazz lazily churned from my fisher-price turntable, smooth notes drifting through cross-currents of night. The wail of a baby in the apartment across the avenue, the one-bedroom oven that smothers her even while the window is open. I turned my music up, knowing she could hear it as it drifted, filling midnight half-silence with its raw sweetness — I was hoping it would soothe her, knowing it couldn't.

Crushing ant-colony between sidewalk cracks, watching their sectioned bodies twist, once, twice, wipe, and their bug-guts would stick to your sneakers, brown and thick . . . and sometimes we would watch them tremble around awhile, bumping into each other, confused and bleeding. They only came when someone spit out gum; they came out to eat, all together like a big family, to eat the Bubbleyum that I thought tasted like pennies.

We couldn't fit the lamp even though there were two monster trucks. I sat next to it in the back of our golden Valiant, twisting my hands through its brass loops, watching the world. My mother handed me a dirty yellow crayon with a speckled wrapper, "you left this" and I held it hard, letting my sweat pour into it, running it through the crevices of my palms, breaking it. Lemon wax flaked onto the vinyl seat. I felt the rumble of the earth as it skidded out from under me; there was a sweet race of trees, as their greenness blurred into one.

NALINI GUPTA

IDOL AWARD: BEST LITERARY WORK

THE DUCHESS REPLIES

(Written in memory of Browning)

Will't please you stay and look at me?
I am the last Duchess painted on the wall
So pretty I look alive. You must
Wonder at my charms now
The Duke paid his painter well
To fashion me
And here I stand.

Perfectly pure and still
And not a blasted stain to mar
My pictured countenance. Mark,
This painted blush that thrives
At my breast (as though 't were born
there) and note, here, the fair flesh
That dares boast of freshness
Before you pass.

Pass, on to the next wretched rarity
In this, my husband's gallery
One of many am I and not the first
A prize of his possession — as was
That mangy mistress before me (her
Frame is hardly as magnificent as mine).

No, not the first are you
To pass thus, and wonder at my poise
Strangers like you never guess
The depth and passion
Of an earnest glance nor catch
The faint half-breath that dies
Before it ever betrays its pain.

Sir, you need not bother
To ask what cast
This shade o'er my naked eye.

What called this spot of sorrow
To my cheek. 'T was not my husband's
Manner only — but his mind
For mastery. The man
Of stern command — who gave me all
And murdered me.

UNHEARD SYMPHONY

The unheard symphony
plays its songs
of love and breath,
of hope and death,
to those far too few
who still listen . . .
playing throughout
the eternity of night.
Every glittering light,
a single player
of a celestial orchestra.
Each a voice
in the chorus
of Heaven and Earth.
Each, a piece of god,
in a mute harmony
of silent musicians.

YADDO

There are bone colored, dried up fountains
Filled with decayed kaleidoscopes of leaves.
Only one is still filled with water and
Koi hide under its mammoth lily pads.
Their alien mouths open and close
And I wonder if they are cold
In this place named
After a little girl's mispronunciation.

In the distance, but closer than I first thought
Is the house itself,
Looming, gray, allusive.
A haven for artists it reads;
Please respect their privacy and
Do not cross over the line.

In the rose garden
It is too late for the roses.
The trellises are skeletons
Covered in rotting sweetness.
How perfect I think-
Shadow, shadow, Yaddo
This place where I can feel
A sense of mysterious artistry
But am not allowed to see it.

I vow to someday live in Yaddo,
For a while, in the shadows.
Alone and palely loitering,
Never speaking
Except to the fish
Hiding in the water.

OCTOBER EVENING

Black cauldron of juniper berries
Heavy on auroral flames
Steeping in the night.
Aromas like a chant drift
Through the house.

My offerings should suffice.
Every year I pluck and prepare
A sweet head wrapped on a stick
With a velvet noose around its neck,
Choked for a treat.

Bells crack like lightning.
The shrieking begins outside,
And the witches threaten tricks.
I run to the door with my basket,
First sacrifice of the night.

SECRET

A chill rain had fallen upon the city since late in the afternoon showing no signs of letting up. Shade and his guests were settled in his snug house, nestled in their drunkenness—safe from the cold wet night. Warm conversations buzzed about in the soft light of the t.v. room. Earlier in the night, Tina dropped in, just for a few beers and to deliver the latest news of Tru, but she was persuaded to stay the night. When she spoke, it was with a smile on her face, but the boys could see that she was dying without him. Someone shouted, "Beers up to Tru!"

"Beers up!" someone else shouted, followed by more of the same.

Then, together — "Never above ya. Never below ya. Always beside ya."

Shade rustled in his chair and nudged Destiny so she would look at him. She did. He looked at her for a while; she loved that. He seemed to swallow every feature of her face with his eyes. He wanted to kiss her so badly, but she would never kiss him in front of his friends. She hated even the slightest displays of affection in public. Even besides that they didn't have a real physical relationship. They spent entire days together without a single kiss. Shade wished she was more affectionate, but that was a small matter. She gave him all the affection she could and he appreciated that. He appreciated her wholly. Sometimes, while he was driving her around in her car, he could see her, in the corner of his eye, looking at him with a smile on her face. Sometimes she leaned over and gave him a quick kiss on the cheek and that meant the world to him.

Shade could bear it no longer; so, he grabbed Destiny by the hand and whisked her up the stairs without resistance. They went to his room and kissed for a long time; he never tired of kissing her when she let him. That night Destiny seemed especially close to him. She was soft and yielding and so much more passionate than before.

She fell to his bed and pulled him in to her by his shirt. He followed, but paused for a moment, resisting the pressure of her hand tugging him in. She had a look in her eyes. And he wanted to see it for just a little while longer. She had beautiful eyes—distant and hazy. He could never tell what secret thought she was thinking; her distant eyes never gave even the slightest clue. He stared back at her. She was the girl he had fought through all those years to find—somehow knowing that one day he would reach out his hand and hers would be there. She was the girl who would drink away Sunday afternoons with him; who loved Wednesday nights and the trouble they bring; who saw vitality in dirty old men slouched over dirty old bars working on their last drink of the evening. She was just the compassionate, drunk, female counterpart he'd been looking for to accompany him down the road to ruin.



He stopped holding back. Things were moving so fast Shade lost his self in the moment—kissing and feeling and savoring. Shade hadn't gotten so worked up in months. He and Destiny were in synch with nothing to stop them. He slid her clothes off and she his. Together they slipped under the sheets. Destiny was soft and smooth to the touch. Her body was pale and inviting in the cold darkness of his room, "This is it," Shade thought to himself. "I'm finally going to have her. The same girl who was so indifferent to me at Jill's party. And now she's here, with me, in my bed." He felt so close to her. He was so happy—it took a moment to notice. It wasn't working.

Something had gone bad. She was tensed up and silent. He could advance no further. The "three weeks" were over. He cursed himself aloud for somehow messing things up again with yet another girl.

"Are you alright?"

There was something very wrong and he was nervous. He heard her swallowed cries. He saw the glistening tears on her cheeks.

"Destiny, what's wrong?" He asked lying beside her, wanting so badly to caress her and calm her down. But there was a cold barrier around her and he dared not venture any closer. Shade couldn't figure out what had gone wrong. Everything was so right just a moment before. All he could do was wait for her to do something; either speak or get dressed—anything!

"I'm sorry Shade," she sobbed, "I just can't."

He rolled over and softly caressed her sweet hair, but she was stoic and he restrained himself from touching her again. "It's O.K. really," Shade tried to reassure her. He just didn't know how to make things any better; didn't even know what had happened to make them worse.

"No, it's not — I'm so sorry."

He looked at her with a confused look, but it was lost in the darkness.

"Shade, I want to make love to you so badly. I owe it to you I mean you've been so—"

"You don't owe me anything, Destiny. I never felt this way about anyone. I care about you. I'm not just fuckin' around."

She started to cry again and all he could do was keep talking, but the words came out insincere and detached. "I don't need sex. I want it and it would be great to have with you, but it's alright if we don't. I don't expect anything. I don't care if we ever—"

"Shade, why do you do this to me?" she screamed, staring blankly at the ceiling. Destiny was frantic again and he had no idea why.

It's O.K. Shh. Shh. It's O.K." he comforted, but it was in vain.

Destiny cried to no end.

"Take me home," she begged.

She quickly dressed and disappeared. Shade tried to follow, but his

bladder took him on a detour, which presented a whole new problem for him in his excited state. With a quick, "Jesus Christ!" and some inspired acrobatics, Shade was dressed and down the stairs looking for Destiny.

Eric, McKittrick, and Tina were still up talking over the last beers. Destiny was already in the car. Eric gave Shade a confused look.

"I don't know," Shade answered.

He got in the car. It was already filled with smoke from a cigarette she had smoked while sitting alone. She knew Shade would be out in a minute for her, but she wasn't sure that she had been waiting for him or if she had even been waiting at all. It was raining hard. The night was dark. Shade lit a smoke and started the car.

"Wait . . . You're drunk."

An awful silence pushed them apart.

"Do want to go home or not?"

In his anticipation of her answer, he was full of hope that she would come back to him and snap out of her fit.

"Yes."

She was gone.

"Alright then."

He backed out of the driveway and they were off. She was cold because Shade had his window down, but didn't speak a word the entire way home. She smoked another cigarette and looked out the window into the indecipherable blackness flying past her. Shade was driving through the heart of Hell. It was dark. It was raining. He was drunk and tired and miles apart from the girl in the seat next to him.

When they pulled up to her house, Shade parked her car and got out. He walked her to the door. She didn't want him to, but he always walked her to the door and she let him if for no other reason than to be rid of him.

"Goodnight," he softly said.

"I don't know if I'll talk to you tomorrow," she said without stopping or looking at him.

"Well, I guess it's in your hands now."

She opened to door and disappeared.

It was a long walk home, but he was trashed so it wasn't too bad. When Shade got back to his house, Eric lifted his head off the armrest on the couch. Shade looked like death — he was soaked, exhausted, and had walked off his buzz a long while back, but was still breathing; that was enough for Eric, who dropped his head and passed out after affirming that his best friend made it back.



Shade fell up the stairs and crashed onto his bed. He had a dream. It was midday in the summer. He and Destiny were riding bikes on a beautiful road through the country. They rode past old school houses and red barns. They rode down hills and through forests, passing rivers and ponds. He felt wonderful. He was drunk and in love with the most beautiful girl he'd ever known and in the most beautiful countryside he'd ever been. They stopped beside a railroad crossing at sunset. There was a great big couch sitting next to a mailbox in the middle of nowhere. It had a sign taped to it that read, "FREE." They both sat down and rested on the couch. For a while they just sat and watched the sun go down over a vast field of gold. She leaned in carefully and kissed him softly on the cheek. Then Shade woke up alone.

His head hurt so badly he couldn't think. He had to have some pills before anything else, even pissing—this was life or death. Downstairs, Tina was cooking breakfast. Eric was quietly smoking a cigarette, watching t.v. McKittrick was still passed out on the floor. The house was a mess.

"Pills," Shade croaked.

"Good morning," Tina chirped, tossing him the bottle of pills. She and Eric had already taken theirs. Shade washed them down with a large glass of water followed by another and another until he'd drank six pints of water. He was haunted by an emptiness inside him the more he recalled of the night before.

"What did you drive Destiny home for last night?" Tina asked.

"I don't know," Shade said filling another glass of water. He waited a long time before going on—all the while his eyes were becoming slightly hazy, slipping away from the objects they were cast upon. "We're upstairs about to have sex," he continued, "and then she says she's not ready. So I'm like — it's o.k. — you know? Really, it wasn't that big of a deal at all, you know? I'm in no hurry to do anything. But she just kind'a flips and makes me take her home. What was I supposed to do? She was crying."

"That's fucked up . . . anyway you ready to start drinking again?" Eric asked. He had enough of his own problems to fret.

"Eric you insensitive lush. God bless you," Shade said grabbing the Heather Cream from the liquor cabinet and a cup of coffee from Tina.

He'd be good and drunk soon enough, but that only brought matters closer to him. Whatever she was hiding behind those distant eyes of hers was still secure, but she had let him inside for a brief moment and he was changed from the experience. What was it that she was hiding? Would she be back one day to tell him? He didn't know. He was desperately lost.

"Off with his head!"
Shrieked the queen
With a pointed finger
In my direction
Her cheeks showed
A wicked smile
Below the twinkling, beady eyes.
With the fateful finger in my direction,
I stood upon a dusty ground
Amidst an open circle,
Amidst a betraying crowd
As I was grabbed by my dingy collar,
I turned, only to see death,
Wearing a black mask
Ready to rope me down,
Just to follow orders.
Helplessly, I was carried
Through the crowd
Tearing at me,
Spitting on me.
With my head finally on the stump
I could see nothing but the queen
Laughing at me
Having decided my life
With a mere shriek
And pointed finger.
I closed my eyes in defiance
Waiting for the cold steel to
Tear through my flesh.
The suspense mounted in my mind.
I heard death raise the axe
Ready to give the final blow
But not before I thought upon
The power of her finger
For the last time.

Grey skies, secrets
blowing in the breeze,
whispers of the heart
slowly engulfing,
slipping through the body,
tingling a sensation
of tangled emotions.
The soul intimately
smiling . . .
eyes inviting,
a touch of desire.
The mind nauseated
with excitement and
confused with
pleasures of the night.

THE LAST WORD

everything is falling into place lately
success is just an everyday affair
oh shit, i guess i've got nothing to complain about
i've got nothing to complain about anymore

i wanted to be everybody's nobody
but now i want to crawl back into my pocket
unnoticed, into my deep dark hole

i always loved the gray days, the snow, cold rain
now i love being all alone in the crowd
i want to be happy, so i can be depressed
i want to clean up, so i can make a big, big mess

wanna be a successful loser
have my first house down by the ocean,
pull up a comfy chair and wait for a hurricane,
then pick up the pieces again

and when they need something done,
count on me, i love to be overburdened.
another request?
who do you bastards think i am?
now that's a holiday



and i like missing her
if she were still here, if she didn't leave,
i'd be so happy, so content, i'd love her complete
so won't she go away, just leave
and let me enjoy the misery

the more i win, the more i change
the more i hate it
if i had my way while i'm having my way,
i'd sit alone, glass of whine in hand, and complain
i'm my own best cliché

by the way, i hope you like this poem
because i loathe it
and you know what? i love to write
so i don't think i'll write again

i'm not looking for your sympathy
i've got that much covered
with any luck, you think i'm arrogant, self indulgent,
ungrateful, or maybe you're just pissed
'cause you wasted your time reading this
now you have something to complain about too
so, friend, can you spare an hour or two

A laud of joy to better days,
To placid moments meant to stay,
In minds of those who find this place,
And take to heart its every grace.

Here, solace found by ones who know,
For ones who seek and ones who go.
And venture here on certain days
To feel it's warmth in endless ways.

Never cease to come alone-
For here, light guides the paths unknown.
So, fly from regions far and wide
And flow with ocean's rampant tide.

Stay for moments short and sweet,
Or stay for years until complete.
But keep in mind what this place means
And know that it brings life to dreams.

NAKED AT 3 AM

In a bar that smacked of so many others in the greater metropolitan area, two men sat with one swiveling bar-stool standing silently between them in an empty tavern with low music and little light, on a particularly bright autumn day. This is what happened.

"What's your dream?" the man said as he tilted back his bottle of light beer.

"What?" the stranger replied.

"You know, your dream. Everybody's got a dream. So what's yours?"

"I don't have one," the stranger answered staring at his hands as he rolled his dark bottle of beer back and forth between his palms; rocking it like an infant.

The man turned himself to face the stranger. "Come on, everyone's got one. Do you want to play quarterback for the Bears, be rich, famous, both? Fuck a supermodel? What?"

"Mine's not like any of those," the stranger said still facing the mirrored back of the bar.

"Everyone says that. Are you one of those people who wants to end hunger, or have world peace of something?" the man asked.

"No."

"Good. I hate those people."

"Do you really want to know?" the stranger said turning to face the man's gaze.

"Yes, I really do," the man said suddenly aware of his oddly urgent tone.

"I want to do my laundry."

Laughing lightly and feeling suddenly relaxed the man said, "Yeah good one. No really I want to know, you've got me interested.

"That's it. I wasn't joking," the stranger said turning his eyes back to his bottle.

"Laundry? That's your dream? Out of all the things in the world, you want to do laundry?"

"That's not what I mean," the stranger explained turning his stool back to face the row of liquor bottles, standing at attention even with his eyes, "I don't just want to do some of my laundry. I want to do all my laundry. I want every piece of clothing I own to be clean. I want it all pure at the same time. I want a fresh start," he paused slightly, "Even when I do all my clothes, I'm still wearing some. The socks on my feet, the shirt on my back, are being soiled while the others are being cleaned.

"I tried it once naked," he continued, "I went to one of those Coin-Op's and filled every washer to the brim. I put my suits in, my jackets, shoes, belts, everything. And I stood there, naked at 3 AM listening to the dull hiss of the water as it poured out over my clothes; over everything. Hot water, warm water, cold. Fabric softener, gentle agitation, color-safe bleach, regular Clorox, spin cycle. I had chosen what I wanted, the way I wanted them clean, and the machines were cleaning, they were cleaning everything, making everything one. Starting from the same point, the same cleanliness. A fair start. What they did after they came out of the dryer, that's their business. If one gets a mustard stain, well that's just how life goes. I'm not trying to coddle them and protect them you understand, I just want for one moment, at one point in my life for everything to start together."

"It didn't work," the stranger said with a laugh to himself, "I got it all home, and opened the door to my room, and that's when I saw it. A small dark sock, turned inside-out, lying at the foot of my bed. And that's when I realized it. I realized that I could never have my dream. That small humble sock made it clear to me. I've learned to live with the knowledge that I'll never have my dream. And a man can't change his dream. It's not like picking a new place to eat breakfast. Your dream isn't something you choose. It's you. It's ultimately who you are. It's fundamentally intrinsic. Do you see? My dream destroyed by a sock."

The stranger stopped and tossed a beer-nut into his mouth with the flick of his wrist. The man turned away, stared for a moment at the clean dark ashtray that lay to his left on the shiny bar top.

"So," the man said, "Do you think the Bears will cover the spread?"

HOLDING ON

I am sitting in a checkered chair
that is pulled up close
to a hard wooden table.
Above my head a fan twirls -and
the warm breeze soon
encompasses my spirit.
My hair falls in my eyes
and through the strands
windows of light
bring an image into focus.
In my arms he lies,
with the heart of an angel
the soul of a shepherd
and the body of a child.
Looking deep into his eyes,
my own well lip with tears
for he is in pain.
Into his mind,
through rivers of blood and sacrifice
and corners and turns of suffering,
I am moving wildly.
I reach his heart,
and finally,
his soul.
He fills me and completes me.
I have learned of life from him.
His head buries deep into the palm
of my trembling hand.
My strength is helpless
and I cannot sooth his burning cries.
How I yearn to hear his laughter —
to look into those eyes . . .
and instead of pain,
see peace.

CRASHING

Shaky body and angry flower
are booming with racing thoughts

Everything is so quiet and still
but inside my head is so loud
I think I may scream
trying to win what does not exist
hating this energy
being wasted on nothing

Screwing loose knobs
into the wrong holes
while tying pictures with wrong words

Please believe the time is not right
conversations should cease
and silence should prevail

Sleep does not triumph
but instead frenzied rituals
of blood and smoke like a trap the rest stepped over

Where does that leave this?
my poor rabid dog has bitten me
and only forever foaming trails surround this head

THE STRUGGLE IN THE SKY

The day is afraid of the night,
he comes out of nowhere,
pushing her into the earth,
blowing her clouds away.
He hides the birds and the sun,
underneath his black tablecloth,
bringing with him his stars,
tacks to hold the cloth down.
The moon is his king,
the great paperweight in the sky.
But the sun, she is strong too.
She pushes the darkness away,
to once again be free
and let daylight shine.

THE IDOL

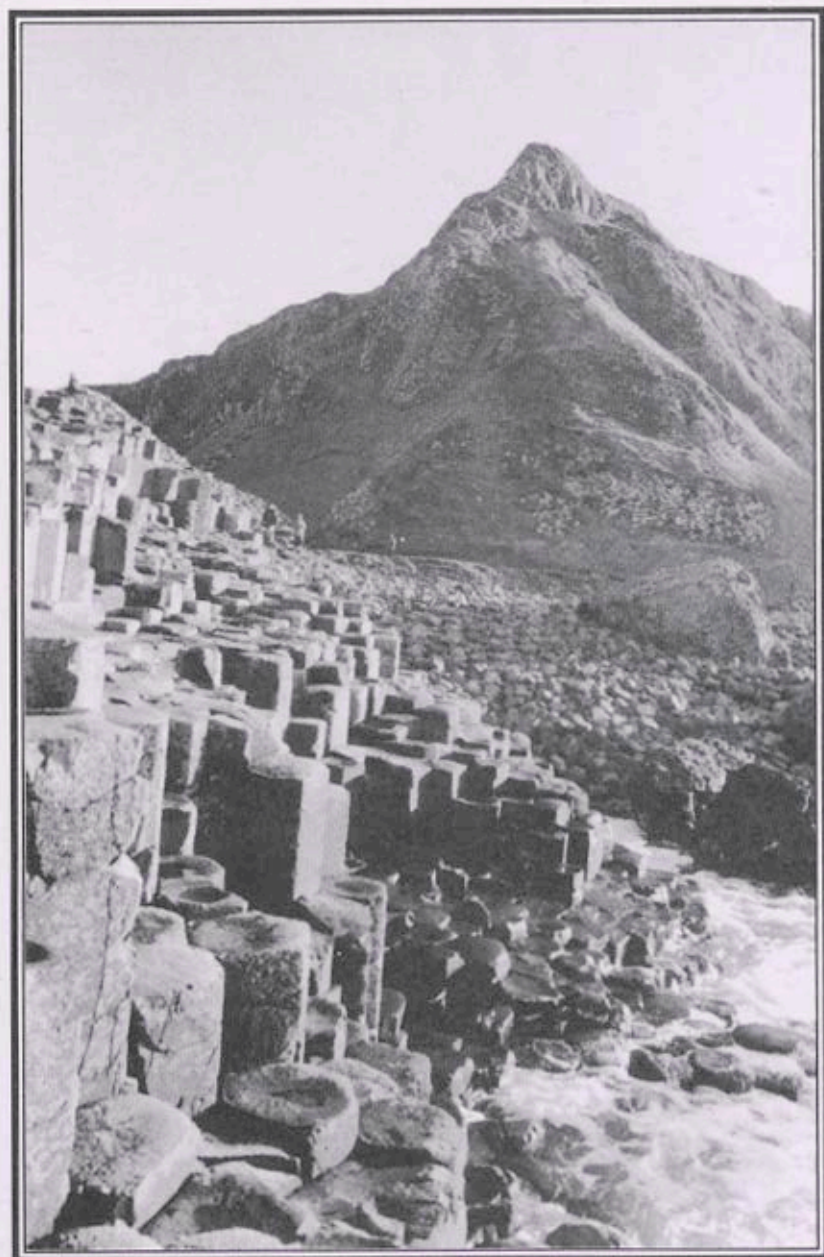


1997

VISUAL ARTS

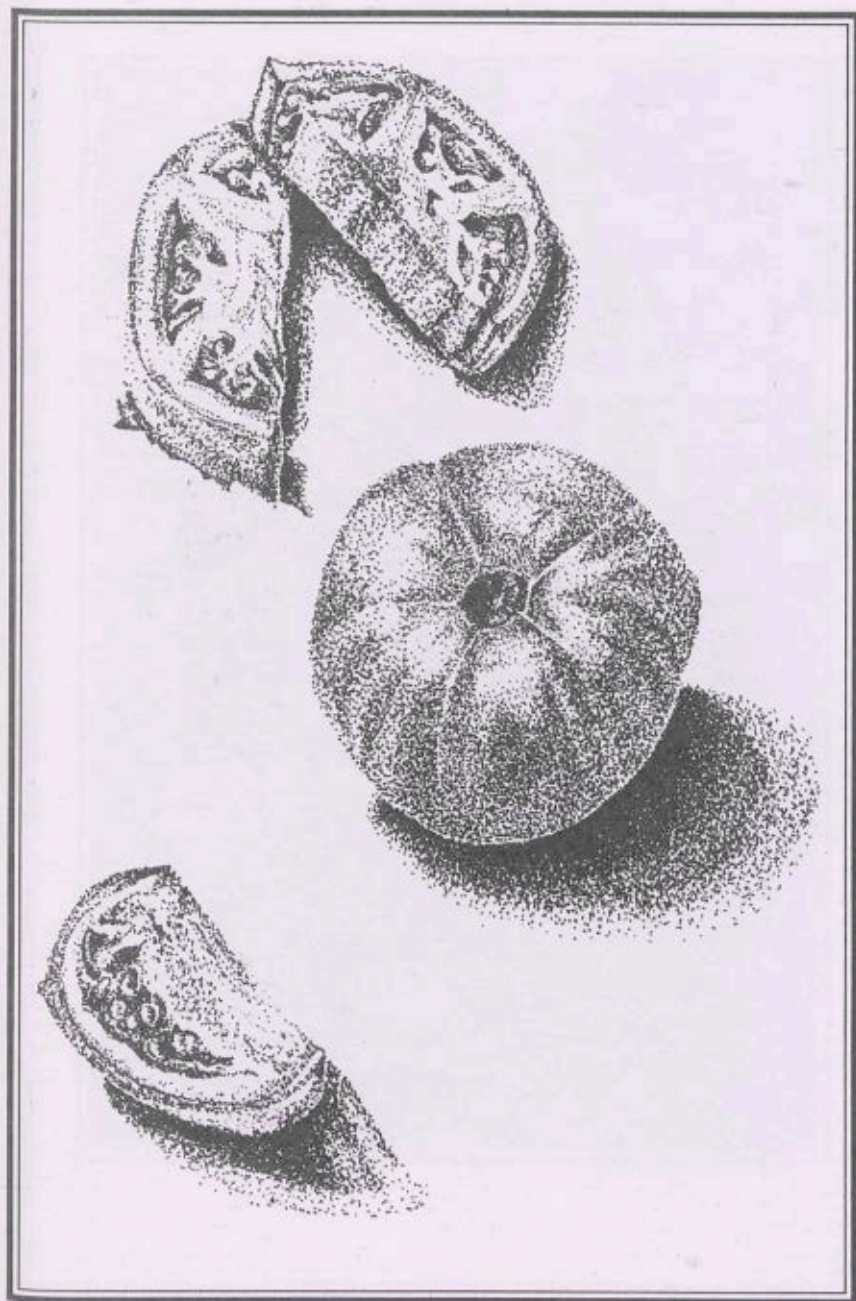
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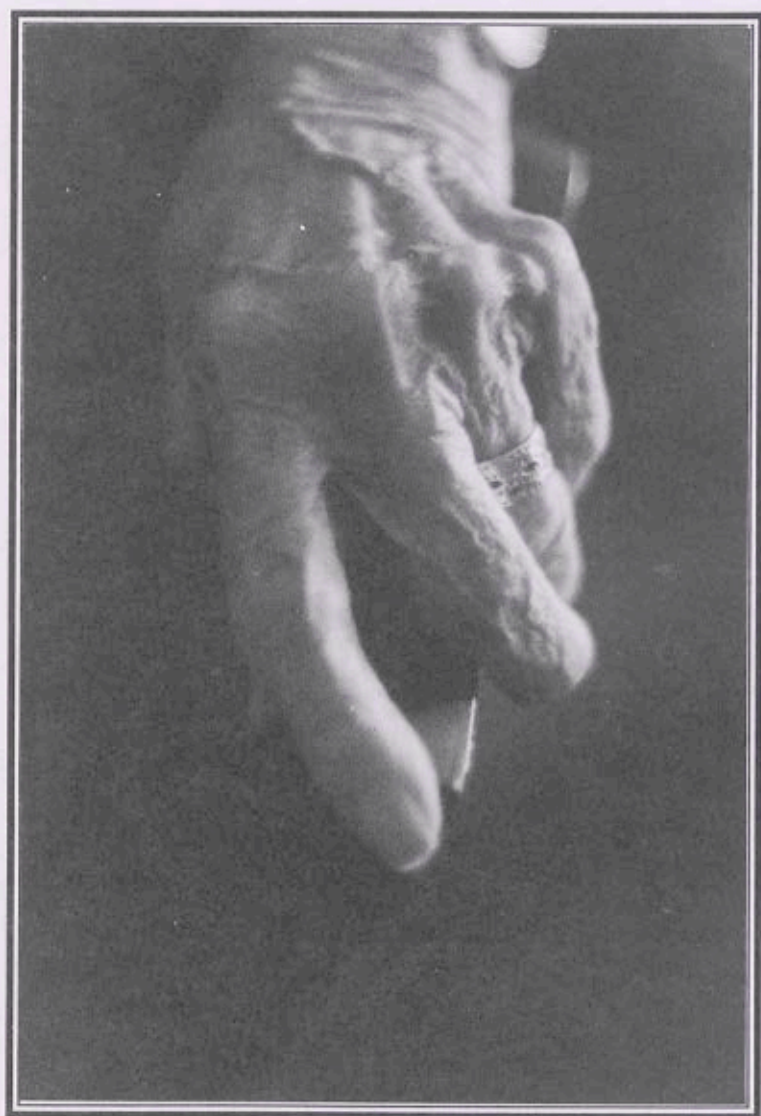
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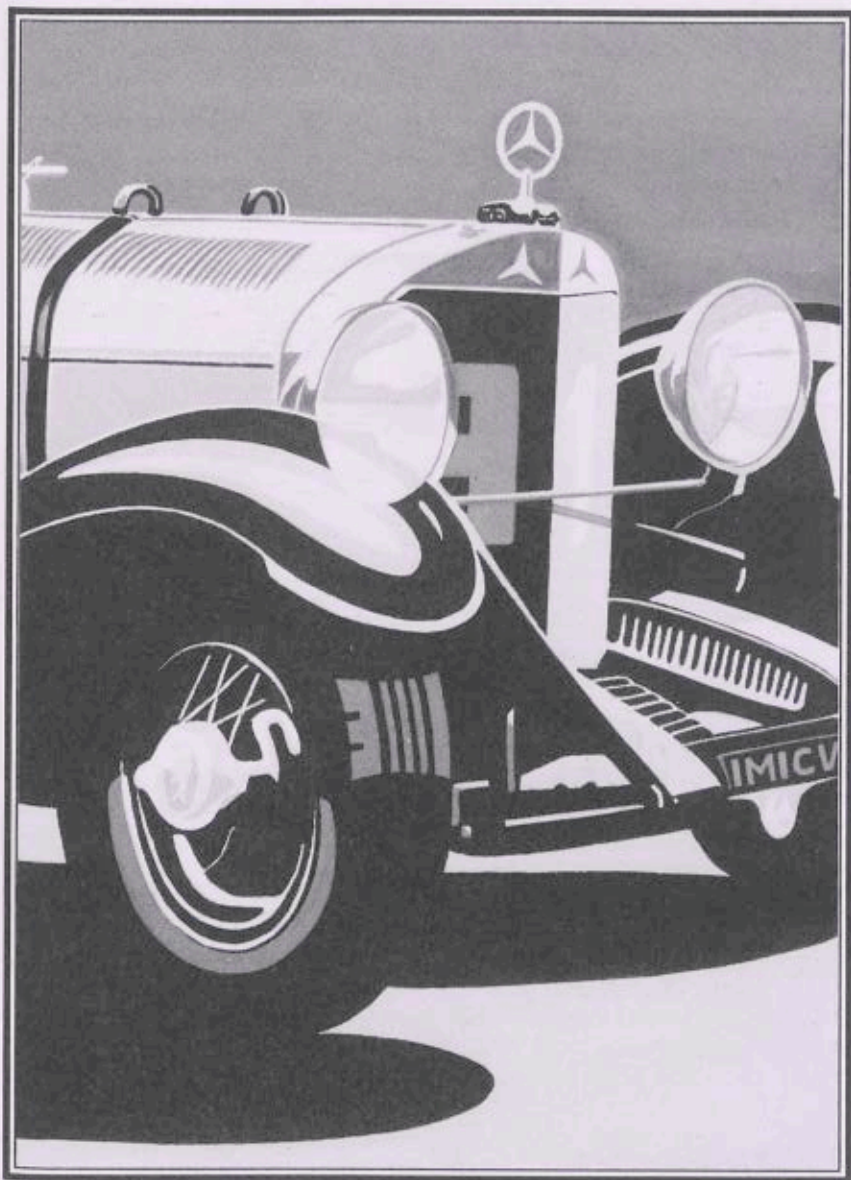
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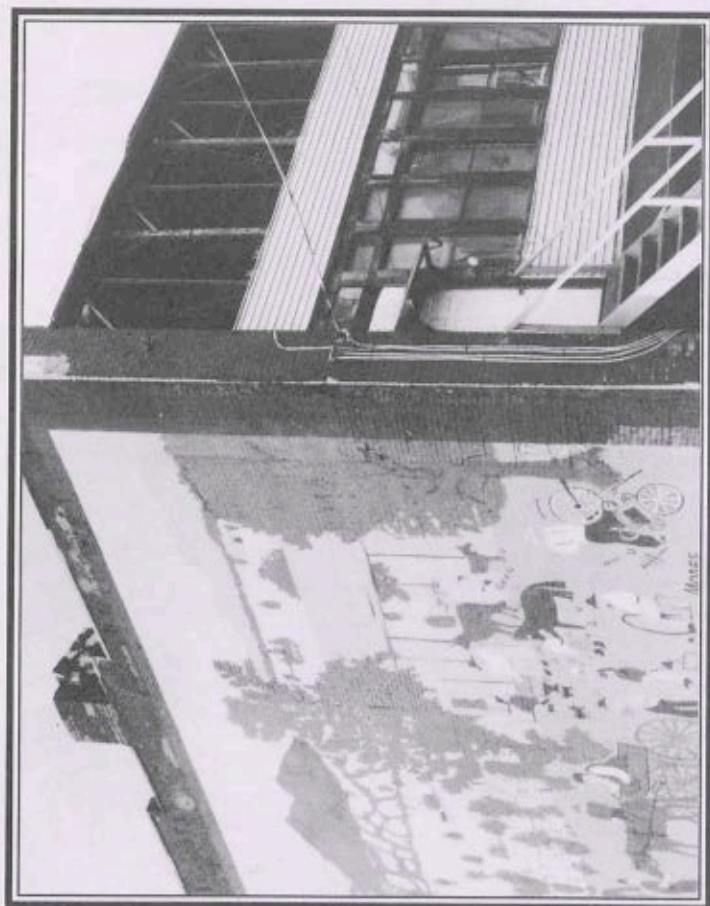
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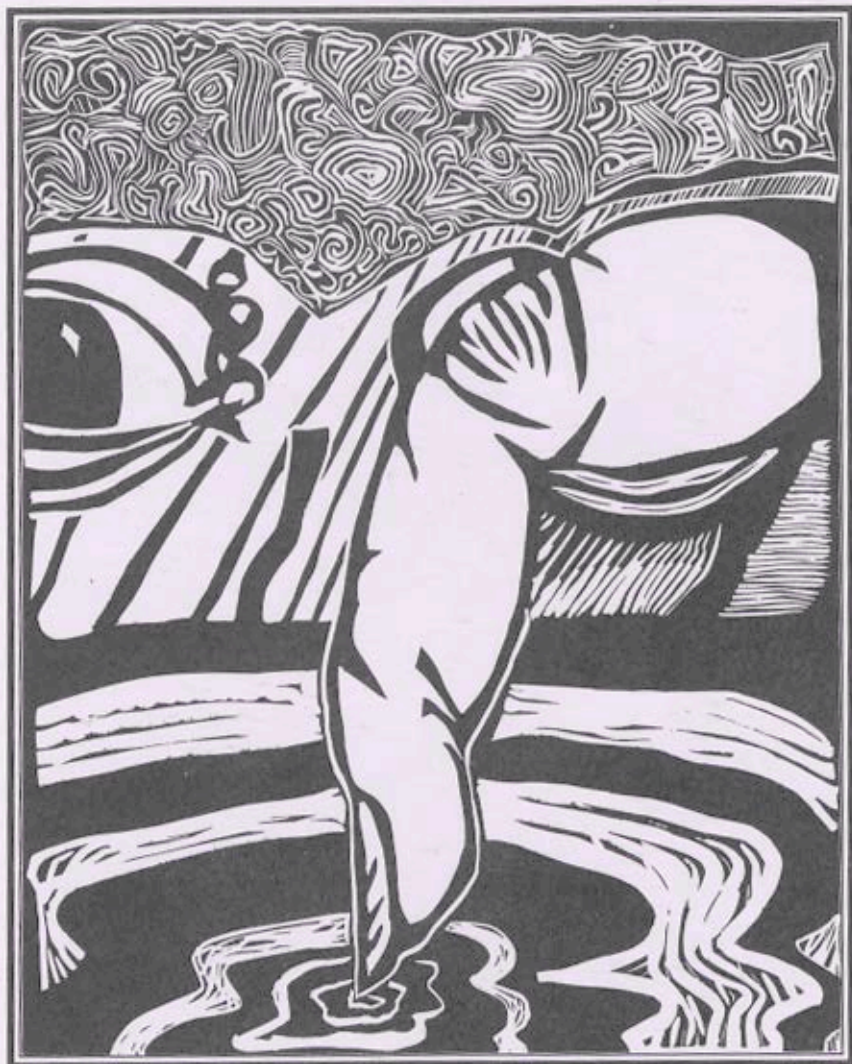


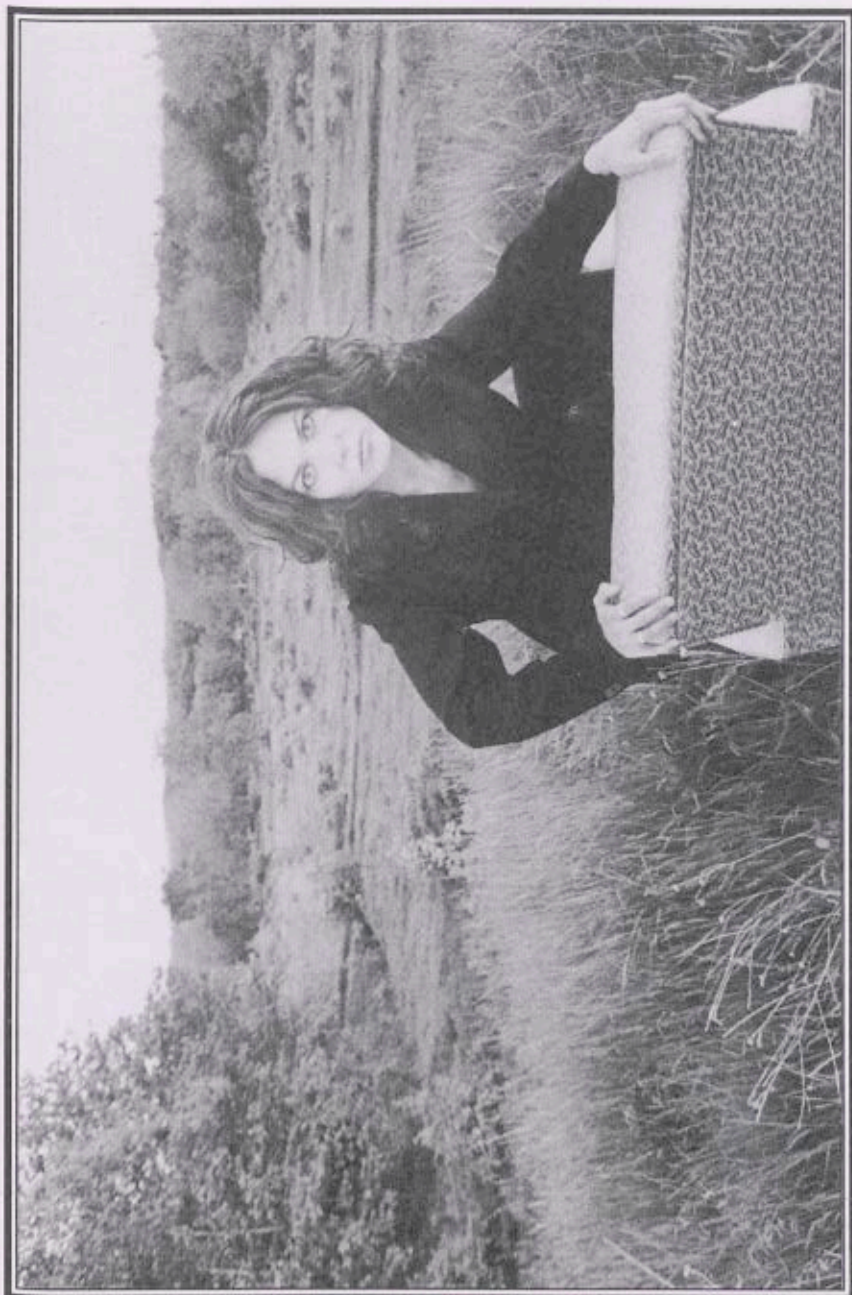


JESSICA ABOLAFIA







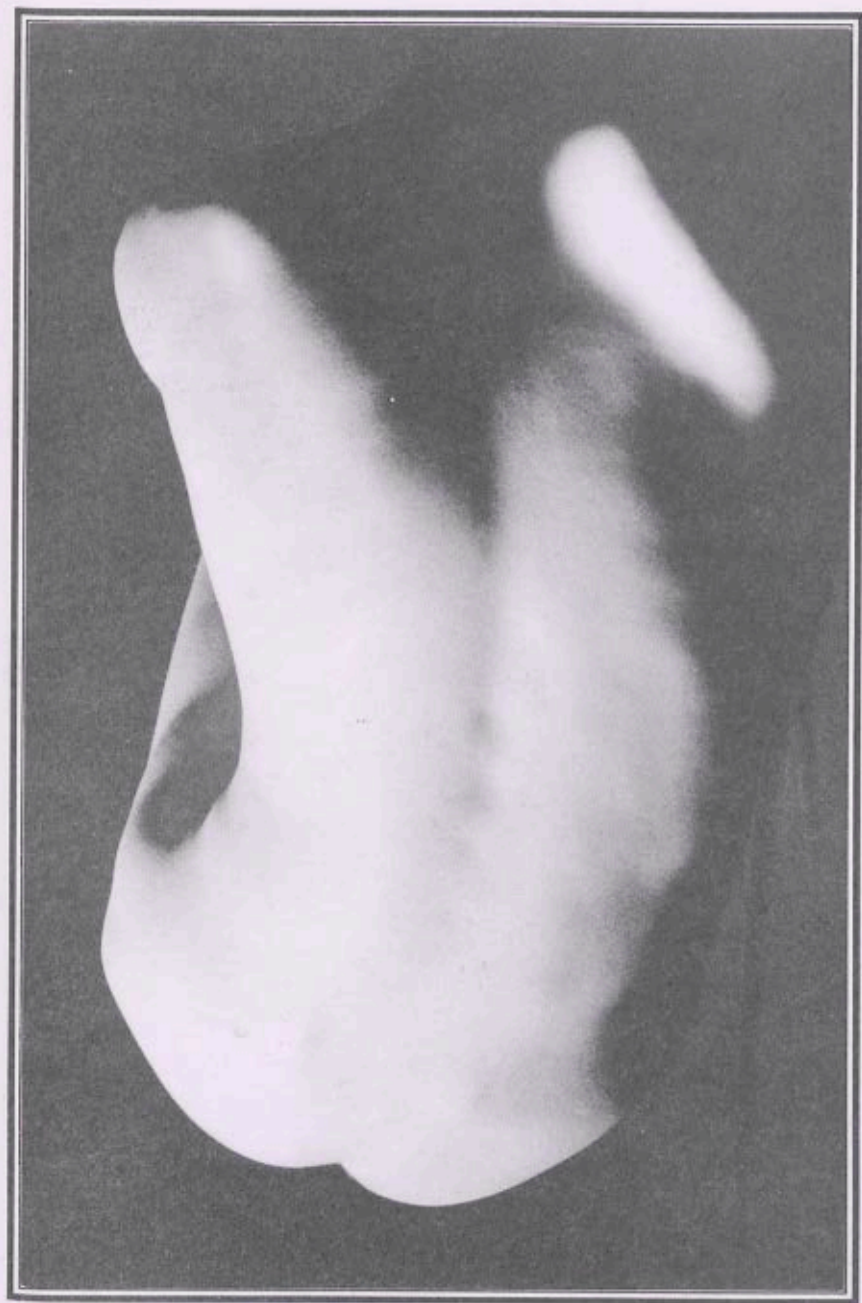


MICHELLE BRICK

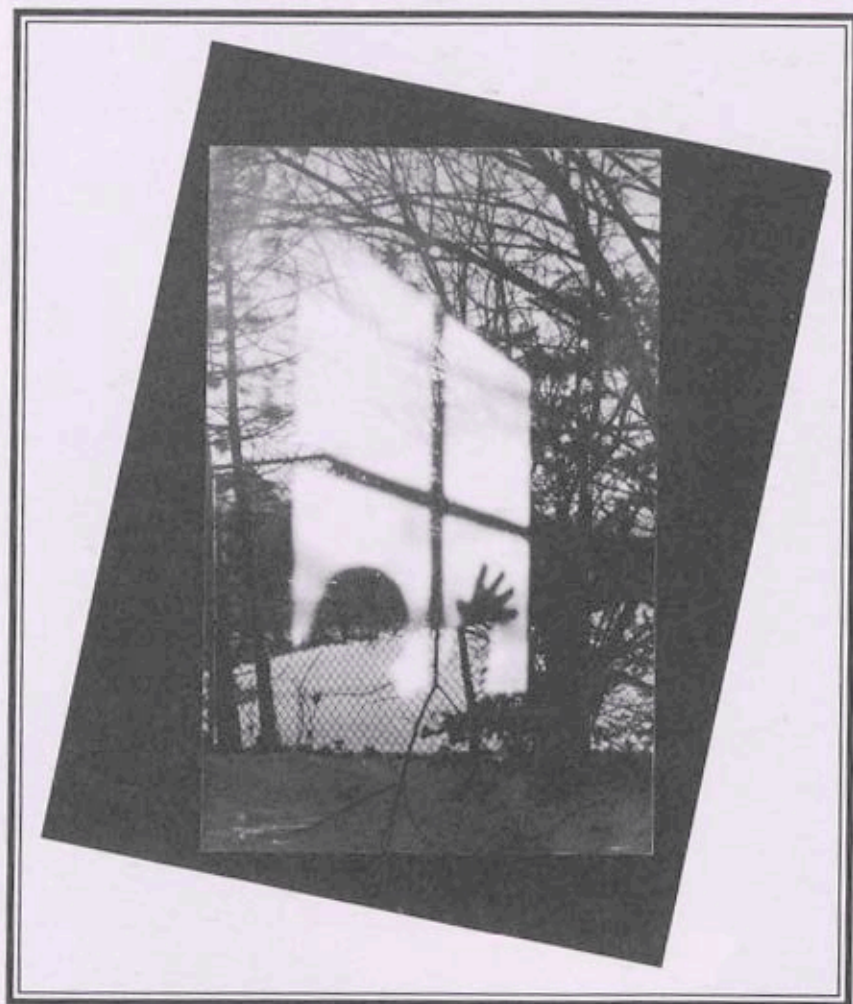








HEATH FRADKOFF



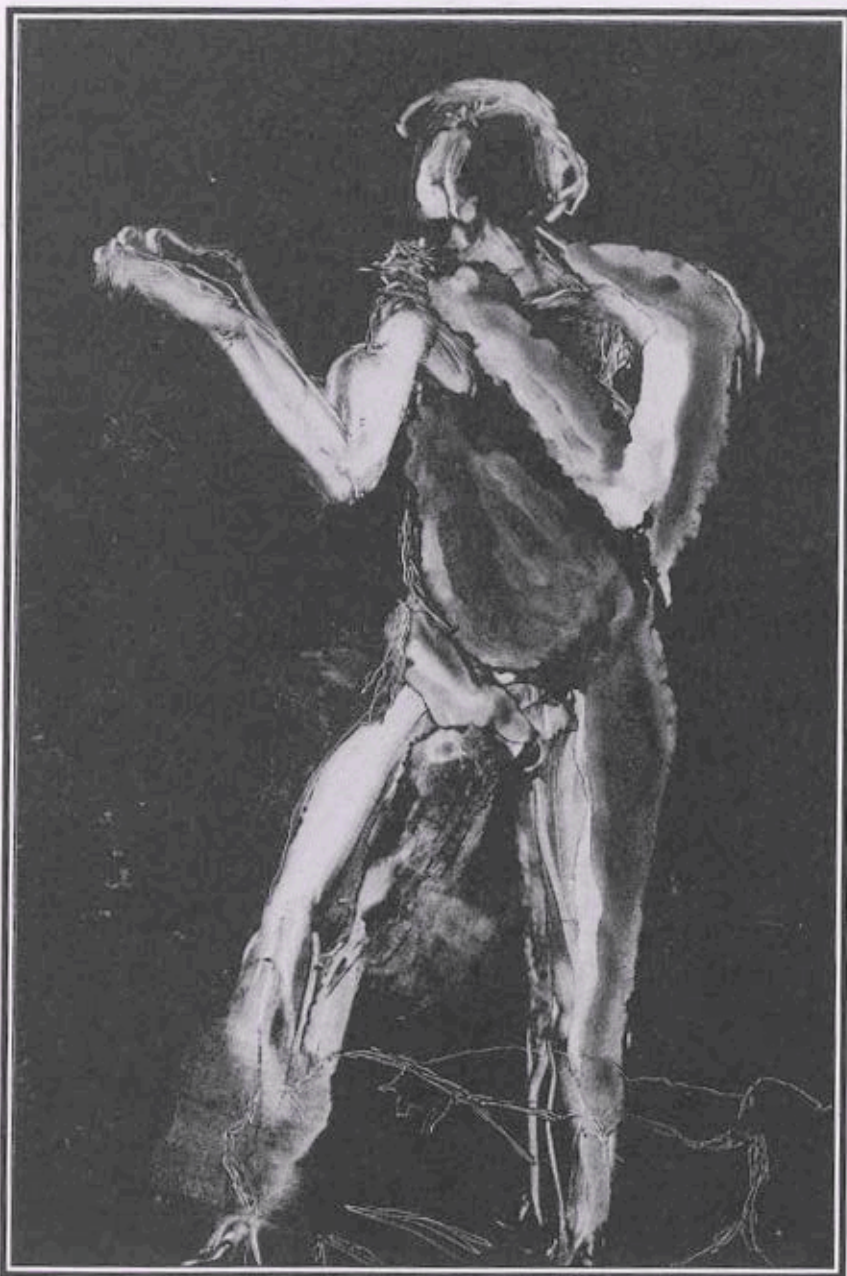


CHRISTINE BOWER





ANDREA BURNS



THE IDOL



1997

LITERARY

PART II

THE DEN OF MALCONTENT

Stomach shaking
threshold breaking
Never ending
dreams of discontent

A daily affair
of simple pleasures,
Afternoon trips
in sesame squares.
 $1/2 + 1/2 = 2$
too much,
too long,
too many
Never ending
dreams of disillusion.

$1 + 1 = 4$
For you I wait,
in lieu of what was said.
I feel the words
that were not heard in
Never ending
dreams of disappointment.

I wake,
2 find you watching,
waiting 4 my signals
2 uncross
The realm of our confusion;
The poem ends
right where it began,
In the bowels of illusion,
in the den of malcontent.

MIND BOGGLING

Anger, orange sparks
bubbling in a broth
waiting to flush the mind.
Frustration . . .
contemplating the outcome,
consequences not yielding
to thy will or desire.
Thoughts . . .
not expressing the passion,
the intimacy within
thy mind and soul.
Surrender . . .
thyself to mere existence
a path of life
that is elicit to eternity.

AIMEE MARKO

I live in Cheshire, Mass., a small town (pop.~3,000) in Berkshire County between Pittsfield and North Adams. We live in a brown house on a winding road that goes around Amos Mountain. I can look out my bedroom window and see Mount Greylock, the highest peak in the state. We are surrounded by woods, and below is a field that is getting to become overgrown. Below the field is another field and below that is a swamp. There is a train route running through it that was turned into a bike path a few years ago, but I remember when we would pause in our playing to run into the front yard and watch the train run through. I can remember the first time my mother took us to the swamp between the mountains.

It was near sunset on a late summer day as we walked into the field and she found the hidden path. I had never noticed it before because thick branches covered it from our window overlooking the field. The shade-cooled air closed over our heads as we entered the green darkness of the woods. On either side of the wide path, there were deer tracks and tiny blue flowers. My sister and I ran back and forth for a while, my mother keeping her walking pace. I looked back once to see, with envy, streaks of sunshine slipping through the trees and blazing on my mother's beautiful blonde hair that she shared with my sister but kept from me. She called us to her, taking our hands, and then we walked out into the field.

My sister and I were dumb with awe, for in the middle of the field, set against the red sunset, was a huge dead tree stripped of all its bark by the harsh New England elements. It sat serenely and majestically on a small mound, surrounded by wild bushes, daring us to run up and explore it. We ran up to it, but my mother called us back because she feared there might be coydogs hiding in the bushes. We walked to the line of trees that surrounded the swamp and found a path through them. As we broke through the other side, a wall of sound and dazzling light hit us. The red sun reflected off the waters, blinding us and shielding the hiding places of all kinds of animals who sang to us: frogs, cranes, raccoons, Canada geese,

and millions of insects. A tiny green snake slithered by on top of the water, guaranteeing me nightmares for a week. A box turtle poked its head above the surface to snap at a sparkling blue dragonfly.

We walked back home, enjoying the view of our mountain from the valley, marveling at its sun reddened color. We watched the sun go below the Greylock range from the path inside the woods, between the two fields, and when we reached our house, the moon was slipping into a darkening sky.

PINK LEMONS

Dime of shwag
In a plastic bag
Cherry on my breath
Coffee black.
Laughter,
tears,
smoked out fears.
Hey man don't you know we're all
strawberries drowning in
powdered sugar!
Vagabonds, infidels,
there's no end to lonely spells
Orange Soda, Crazy Jim.
Sunday cigarettes in November wind.
It was a long time ago,
I swore never to forget what it was I can't quite
remember.

SCANDAL IN THE UNDERWORLD

*The stains of death reek, sight remains murky.
Still — the ancient Styx flows in fury.
Still — the dead wander in file to the ferry.
Still — bent and haggard he speaks the greeting.
"Who goes there, a pence for crossing."
He is Charon, ferryman to eternity.*

*Dense, dead forest limbs dangle.
The slow, sacred . . .
 . . . huh?*

What have we here!?
Charon in L.A. gear?
Shades? A party yacht?
And Marilyn Monroe, hidden below?
Legs open and begging on a cot!

But that's not all!
Pluto is pissed,
Souls not on the list
are crossing the Styx.
And by coincidence,
Charon is getting rich!

So what's the point?
Charon's tokin' a joint
and cheating on his wife!
Nothing changes in the afterlife.

IT WAS ALL SO DIRTY . . .

Slacks sliding
Down,

Arms flailing,
Intertwined with
Legs,
Buttons bursting,
Zippers cracking,
Boxers,
Tangled in her
Bra.

The cycle
Climaxes.

Everything begins
To spin.

It's over.
Things are damp,
soft,

Tired from tumbling,
Ready to be
Dried.

PERPETUAL MOTION

The beat leaked out into the night as we looked both ways and crossed the street. Approaching the dark brick warehouse, a faint bluish glow flashed though the crack underneath a rusted door. . . . behind it a thousand hearts pounding.

He, taller than I, but softer at heart, walked a few steps ahead (a few paces quicker). Our jeans dragged in unison across the gravel, and hung oversized (mine cuffed, his bluer), off our hips.

Boy fingers reach out to grab hold of a cold, tarnished handle to open . . . and enter. Girl fingers pull thick black frames down over eyes to protect . . . and glamorize.

Music pours out now like sand as the door is slowly opened wider. We step in, exiting life, to cross the boundary into living.

Metal hits metal, and the door closes behind us. Up one, up two, up three . . . steps direct boy and girl upwards into darkness; into a deep constant rhythm, felt increasingly by our skin. Now I lead.

Two figures slouch in the approaching doorway: one periodically lifting hand to mouth, creating an orange-reddish glow against light brown skin, his hat low over his eyes. The other, thin under a massive green fleece, searches through his backpack eagerly, as steps bring us closer. A glance, then recognition, prompts a smile to spread across his face, and he leaves the doorway to greet me. Strong arms wrap themselves around my waist and lift; soft, dry lips touch the "rose sunset" dusted hours ago across my cheek. Lips, which at one point knew no boundaries, now confine themselves. An "I've missed you," slips out unintentionally from under my tongue, and the arms tighten. The boy at my side stares off into the darkness, bored, hands buried deep in his pockets.

My hugger now lets go of me and nods that we should follow him. The three of us slip between the doorway leaving the smoker alone. Slowly maneuvering through, past, and over a clutter of bodies, we make our way by scattered youth, all gorgeous. Some tight and sleek in vinyl, swaying, others stagnant wall huggers hidden under dark 'hoodies'. Still more flutter around shimmering, socializing in silver and glitter.

To the left, light patterns dance along the gray cement floor as above red laser beams scribble geometric shapes randomly across a translucent screen. Amid this, bodies constantly in motion, gyrating, each separate in their own world; a world consisting of only the music and the bass, but together forming a giant undulating landscape. These bodies, mere silhouettes in the strobe lights seem a part of an anonymous hallucination . . . a lonely mass exodus into a cyber-techno dream. We move deeper in to join them.

Proceeding inward, familiar faces emerge from the darkness around us. A newcomer, seen only once before, and a smile; an older acquaintance, and a

hug. Making the rounds, smiles and hugs are thrown out constantly between the three of us, but we have not come here for fidelity. Only my bored boy shares my loyalty in this place, and we expect to find it nowhere except each other. Tonight is not about loyalty, it is about prestige, image, and escape. It is about who you know and what you want . . . here, anything is possible.

It becomes apparent that we have now been seen. Our entrance has been noted by those only slightly more experienced than we, but regardless, appropriate respect and greetings are expected. The time has come to demonstrate how we have achieved our status. It is time to dance. Each step now becomes deliberate . . . hips swing looser from side to side, a slight slouch crawls down my spine as we make our way to the few vacant spaces left to dance upon. Shiny plastic coated sneakers become my focus point along with the dusty floor beneath them. I hesitate a moment, barely moving to let the full effect of the beat take hold. Knees bend and I begin only an instant after my flanking boy and hugger. Robotically, arms shift right and left, as I coordinate isometric contractions of my torso. Rhythms, faster now, free my feet from their hard partner, and purposely jagged motion turns soft and less deliberate. My thin one touches the brim of his hat every so often, as his ankles fly like frightened doves around each other. My tall one stares upwards into the air, seemingly unaware of the beauty of his body, as his arms, snake-like, push out, pull in, above his pounding feet. It has begun . . .

I stand alone against a condensation dampened wall and it is my turn to be bored. My snake-like boy, within sight, smiles and gestures as he leans in to make sure the young one standing close to him, will hear what he has to say. Hair bleached beyond blond to white, he stares intently, anticipation in his eyes. My thin hugger has long since left, upon the invitation of a vinyl girl, to join her in the bathroom. Glancing down at the sweat hardened leather band strapping the Timex around my wrist, I notice time. Inside our world, nothing records passage of time except the changing dj's, but outside it has become 3:17 A.M. I wish I was in the bathroom.

3:35 A.M. and sweet, heavy smoke curls and drifts skyward stopping only to play around a ringlet hanging down over my eye. I lift hand to dry mouth now, and wrap eager lips around a hot silver pipe. Sucking in air through a glowing herbal cluster, my vision gets warm and my eyelids tingle. Passing this precious gem to the left, clockwise, I hear the beat again. I stare at those around me, and analyze what I see. The lighter flickers on their faces as would a campfire on boy scouts. Huddled together on the floor, I notice their heavy eyelids too, and the nothingness behind glassy, turned off eyes. They seem like a tribe, wandering here, from the outside night, seeking something — willing to share their one joy, in the hope that perhaps I could be the one to tell them what it is they seek. But I know nothing. Turned off, as they, except for the back of my brain, again I feel the beat. A word of thanks, and I stand feeling the blood rush down inside my legs. My heart seems to race and I check



my pulse as always, but determine nothing as expected. I decide to walk. Drawing closer to the towering speakers, the air in my chest vibrates. Each sound hits my skin and sinks in, draining down into red vessels; I feel the pounding now from within. Hissing, a stream from a box at my feet spits out white smoke, letting the lights slice through it as it rises. The smoky arms thicken to encompass those within reach, and me. Nothing is visible except the colorful piercing of lights, programmed to each pounding boom. This cloud feels like floating granules as I take air down into my lungs, thick and gritty. Standing perfectly still, I can feel another cloud, hot in my brain, trickle down to my stomach; my body throbs after a shiver . . . I need to get out.

White dissipates and eyes ease their straining as shaky legs deliver girl to boy, once more. A warmth spreads outward from my stomach now, as I slide in next to him . . . to watch. "Want some?" my tall boy asks, and I tilt my face towards him to watch his lips move. The red, cherry lollipop descends from his mouth towards mine. His stained tongue shows the progression of the colored sugar for which I wait. As if a bullet, the sugar ball ricocheted a crisp burst of sweetness throughout my mouth, only seconds later to be drowned in a wave of saliva. Rolling this magic around my mouth, I smile and take my boy's hand to squeeze.

Destiny, harmony, happiness, unity; slick multi-colored flyers littered with one word inspirations and graffiti illustrations are shoved in my hands from each direction as I pick my way through the crowd once more. The warm feeling in my stomach now resides lower, and pressure from inside my abdomen makes my feet move quickly. I have to pee. Pushing through the paint chipped portal, I round the blue porcelain tiled wall and walk all the way down to the last stall. Over by the sinks I can hear chatter pouring out of mouths sped up from a pill or a powder, and ten different stories of previous nights overlap. Through the din of gossip one voice is significant emphatically testifying to anyone who will listen "I LOVE you . . ." The swish of the toilet water hushes her repeated profession, but once I step out into the aisle I meet the mouth that had no foe.

"Honey!" she gasped. The diva, eyelashes curling far above sparkling green eyes, (which were dilated so as to almost let me peer into her brain) smiled. Cherokee hair flowed off her shoulders, and her sweet green apple scent kissed me. I hadn't seen her since I had returned home. Holding me at arms length to surmise any changes, I anticipated her blissful greeting. "I love you too, girl."

Arm in arm, honey girl and diva walked out into darkness once again. This time she led. Long brown hands unfurled pale fingers from their palm to place a single white dot of joy in the center. A pill. Hand to mouth now, and the joy falls in.

"Just Wait . . ."

I stroll through the darkness
Somewhat looking, somewhat searching
The snow kisses my feet
Lighting up the darkness
I am shivering uncontrollably
I begin to like being out of control
A sense of freedom overwhelms me
I can see my breath
As I exhale a warm, misty cloud
It's almost as though I can see my thoughts
And everything is clear
I can't wait for the rest of my life to begin
To start fresh in the undisturbed snow
And as I feel this uncontrolled freedom overwhelm me,
I know I can never go back inside

COLUMBUS DAY

These days the shoreline lies naked
October has arrived, fearsome Indian summer
stripping the home from the houses
boats lay limp in unraked front lawns that autumn
Nobody's trying to sneak on the beach
not even the seaweed;
who's there to rake it?
The nerve of the old shell-fisherman
now rears its ugly head toward lottery tickets
complaining about the patriots
and warmer days
Traffic is a void worth being grateful for
but never to the places worth going
where the sun falls daily
like it never has before
just one set of footprints in the sand these days
lonely mild soul coming
home

EPILOGUE

I, one day, came to think
that you have killed a part of me,
but now I wonder, "Did you, really?"
I just believe we're diamonds in the dark,
and we need lovelight to uncover
the multitude of facets that build up
the karats value of our souls.
And furthermore I guess each facet
is actually a butterfly
which lends the beauty of its colored wings
to every twisted wrinkle on one face.

Alas, the butterflies live short.
And diamonds in the mud . . .

Your ice-cold looks have cut a clod
deep in the wise middle of my forehead,
and tears of blood washed off the rust
that covered once a facet of my soul.
You've, thus, just brought to life a little,
fragile and ugly caterpillar
that's gonna turn soon to cocoon,
then live in yet another fall,
be slaughtered by some other looks,
deep wallow in some other tears,
get buried in another wrinkle,
and brisk the laughter on my face
when I'm alive out in the lovelight
while you are dead in egotistic dark . . .

AUGUST

River salve of thinnest cream,
swirling, churning under whisper- screams,
brushing on our waxed wings
searing the ragged race of restless dreams.

Cross-currents, raging and bold
sieved sand, coolness and glow,
seeping between the sharp shadows cast
Smothering the souring shades of night-pass.

and the Silence, ragged and dry
bandit-thief of words, sneaky and sly;
straight like strangers, cool-lipped kiss
cracking of fused limbs, dryness and mist.

SANDLEWOOD

Standing on the dock watching the evening sun slant warmly off of the slow lake water, letting the thick smells of a familiar place fill his nostrils, Marty Holland felt safe. For the first time in a long while he didn't have that dreadful sensation of worry weighing down his shoulders. It was here in this place of boyhood memory that he always came to escape those things which haunted him.

When he was six years old and had cursed in front of his mother for the first time, he ran — left ear still burning from the catlike slap it had received — to this dock, his dock. He would come to this place alone and dangle his feet over the edge, touching the water with only his big toes, watching the concentric circles slowly expand, and expand, and finally merge with each other into a harmonious ripple.

It was here, too, that he fled at the age of thirteen, after his father had died behind the wheel of his car turning onto Bradford Street — the same way he had everyday for the past eighteen years. Marty remembered hearing the sirens from the kitchen as he helped set the table.

When the police came to the door, and his mother grabbed for the hall table as if she had been shoved by the news, Marty ran. He ran out quickly, squeezed past the thick dark polyester legs of the officers, down the street, and through the flashing red lights that colored the night; the redness blocking out any life or sound.

It was a mile and half later when Marty stopped at the edge of the short dock, and stared into the white path of light cut by the moon on the black lake water. Sound and sensation came back to him. First he felt his heart pounding against his sternum, then he could smell the dark water, and finally he tasted the salt water tears that ran in slick trails down his hot flushed face. It was here that he stayed all night without a sound.

So it was that Marty found himself back at this same spot eight years later. He hadn't come back since that night, nothing in his life had seemed to warrant this place of solace, until now. He thought about that night when his father died. It didn't hurt as much as he had thought it would. Maybe time was doing its job after all.

As long as Marty could remember, he had been playing baseball. In fact when he thought of his father, he seldom thought of the night of his death but rather the games of catch they had had in the backyard; his father, over time, going from bare hand, to glove, to catcher's mitt. These were his thoughts as he stood at the end of that dock with his hands held in his pockets, on that warm evening, staring at the red sun falling below the mountains.

This moment was broken when Marty suddenly heard footsteps on the old waterlogged wood, and realized they had been there all along. Marty turned his head over his left shoulder and saw a man walking toward him, wearing khakis, running shoes, a dark blue wind breaker, and a faded Red Sox cap.

"Evening."

"Sure is." the man replied, stopping right next to Marty at the end of the dock.

"I didn't hear your truck."

"I didn't drive."



"Oh," said Marty turning his attention back to the green lake water and the sunset.

The men stood side by side not speaking, both looking out at the lake before them. The man's angular face, tucked beneath the dark cap, shone in the setting light of the orange-red sunset.

"Walk this way much?" asked Marty.

"First time I've been here, but you come here a lot." replied the man.

"Yeah, I come here when I need to straighten things out."

"I know," said the man, "Your mechanics are all wrong, and you can't pick up your target."

"You're a coach," Marty said, disappointed.

"Some times."

Another long pause cradled the moment, as the sound of shore birds and lapping water returned. Both men stood in that comfortable silence for long balmy minutes.

"I don't know what's wrong with me," Marty said breaking the moment; unsure if he had actually spoken the words aloud. "I'm just not pitching the way I can. The way I always have. Hell, I don't even know if I'll make it", he continued.

"You've lost your center. You've got find your balance again," the man said, crow's feet dancing near his eyes, as he squinted into the sun.

"Do you remember when you were nine, and your sister used almost the entire bottle of that cologne?" he continued.

"Yes. I could smell it all the way in my room."

"Do you remember what you did?" asked the man, still looking out at the water.

"Yeah," Marty said closing his eyes for a brief moment, "I told her to go outside and play. I knew Dad was coming home, and that he would be upset. That was his favorite cologne. Mom always said how much she loved the smell of it on him. It was expensive too, as I remember."

"And do you remember what you did when your father came home?"

"When he came home, I poured what was left of the bottle on me, so Jessica wouldn't get in trouble." Marty said looking down as the water bumped rhythmically against the moss-covered pilings.

"That's where you need to be," said the man, eyes still gazing at the top of the sun as it fell beneath the hills.

Marty turned to look at the man's face, but only caught a glimpse of the blue cap, and the angle jaw, as the man turned and walked down the pier. Marty turned back to the water and listened to the man's footsteps echo down the boards. Something within Marty grabbed at his stomach. He turned, but saw no one.

Marty ran to the end of the dock, and onto the soft tan earth that lay beyond it. He turned his head left then right, but found he was alone. Suddenly the sounds came back; the calls of the night birds, the sound of the dozing water, and the hum of a warm evening breeze.

Wild world of encompassing wonders,
Willful, winsome world —
Gigantic.
Totalitarian, Egalitarian
Social stratifications.
Variety, selection, difference
Indifference- religion, race heritage.
Virtue, values, morals
Dilemmas.
Animosity, abhorrence — hate.
Affinity, alliance — love.
Kinship, brotherhood.
Family.
Freedom, choice
Social, political, economical.
Right, correct- legitimate.
Wrong, false- immoral.
World of genius.
Mathematician, scientist,
Aristotle, Plato
Galileo and Harvey.
Thought, reason, humans, nature.
Movement, planets, bodies, blood.
Progress.
Innovation, invention, failure, success.
Limits, boundaries, borders.
World of angels and demons.
Fame, fortune,
Simpson, Simpson.
Murder, death, violence.
Rabin, Garcia, Bosnia,
Business.
Stocks, money, bonds,
Loans, debts.
Debts.
Taxes, bills, checks, cash.
Money, borrowed, owed,
Given, kept, spent.
World of all wondrous worlds.
Equality versus inequality.
My standards versus yours.
Hope versus loss.
Peace versus war.
Me verses you.
Us verses them.
World of wonder, world of wonder, thus I utter:
Oh, brother.

She just doesn't and I don't
either
still we cling
to masthead and railing

we have seen the rats
take the feelings and leave

now the taste of salt from her lip is the sea
that drenches
the paint
of squealing metal

but we aren't scared
we have been here before
we have already drowned in sparkling bottles

bottles that should have been saved for an SOS

sinking with our own creation
we know there will be no trace

still we cling
we're the captain, the final fool
still we cling

QUIET GIRL

Kind of lacking in personality, if you know what I mean . . .
What? Are you crazy? Do you know her? Have you tried?
Silently she sits, wanting to say
something,
but dreadfully unable, the words might sound
dumb.

She's just quiet, you know . . .
her thoughts, her hopes
who wants to hear them? She thinks
she would tell them if they did — if they asked
but they don't.

What her? I guess I don't know her that well . . .
she won't let you in,
to take off her mask
but in her smile, in her eyes, she can't hide
herself.

But she's so quiet . . .
you say, alarmed to find
rage, sex, passion,
all
in her mind.

Who?
In her silence is power, stringent defense,
unbroken by words
that slide off the tongues of others,
superficial and trivial. She only
waits.

Kind of lacking in personality, if you know what I mean . . .
alone,
trapped in a web of insecurity
she cries . . .
What? Are you crazy? Do you know me? Have you tried?

SEPTEMBER AFTERNOON

We told each other
The stories of scars,
Bumps,
And bodily abnormalities:
The crisscrosses on your knees
From a clumsy childhood,
The strange ledge on my head
That I had recently discovered, and
The white knobby bump on my nose.

Meanwhile, you traced
Tickling histories on my
Spine,
And sneezed when my scattering, wispy hair
Touched your nose,
As I lay sated
And purring in
The mid-afternoon obscurity.

Realizing many things that day —
That your hands dwarfed mine,
But I had fuller lips,
And that we both loved
The way of a beautiful woman.
At that, you asked for further
Explanation.

I declined
And watched the sun and shadow
Create distortions on your face.

