

Harbinger 1994



Stephens Magazine of the Creative Arts

HARBINGER 1994

The Stephens College Magazine of the Creative Arts



Chris Home

HARBINGER 1994

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This issue is dedicated to Brenda DeMartini-Squires.

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Read Me

I

odd duck
rat-child
hippie
granola
dreamer
idealist
all of these names I have.
I have accepted them at some point
because they no longer surprise me.
They are used to describe my inside and outside
and I laugh at them
and sometimes they make me sad.
little pieces of me, labelled,
and the names build up
until I am a long list of names
like a long dead spaniard.

II

each person sees me differently,
see pieces and names of them,
names that add on to my list
until I am so many labels overlapping
that no one can read me.
I do not make a complete sentence,
a smooth paragraph, a flowing essay,
only a jumbled gathering of words.
and I write and write and write
to connect the pieces,
to make sense, to be complete,
to be whole,
as I long to be,
so someone can read me.

Monica McLaren

drown

slowly terrible darkness closes
i can't breathe
my chest constricts
i see my hand
far above
fingers outstretched reaching
straining up, up
silence is a thing
not a noise

k. brown

Born Being A Woman

I was born into

Pink blankets, booties, bows,
and ruffled dresses
with matching lace trim socks,
cotton stuffed
white patent leather shoes
tiny gold and pearl earrings.
My afro puffs framed
my doe eyed face.

I've grown into

Levi jeans,
Gap clothes,
Funky socks and penny loafers
black hose and heels on special occasions.
Bangle earrings,
permed straight hair, lip gloss,
and over expressed eyes.

I will accept dying with
flowered house coats,
orthopedic shoes, tanned knee highs,
and sagging ear lobes.
New, under Sears Warranty eyes,
gray hair pulled tightly in a bun
framing a face kept young
with aging face cream and blemish removers.

Antoinette M. Jackson

The Holocaust, a Peculiar Institution

Africans transported by boats,
Jews transported by trains,
to wait for an arrival into an unidentified land.
Unlucky ones made it to America and Auschwitz
a separate but equal set of concentration camps.
To Africans, a pair of chains were given,
to Jews, a striped uniform.
Together, maimed and marked
with cow brands,
the master's last name,
tattooed numbers,
and colored stars.
11 hours of daily labor,
waited for survivors.
Families separated,
women raped.
Plantation owners, the African's Third Reich,
cotton fields were gas chambers.
Young Jews taught "Never to Forget."
Young African Americans are either
tired of hearing about it,
or would just rather forget.
These are the reasons, ghettos that once
belonged to the Jews, are now ours.
Something inside is broken.

Antoinette M. Jackson

Found Poem

Ernestine said goodbye to Lemuel
her 17 yr. old baby
one late Friday night.
A skinny boy who didn't say much
but made up for it with his smile.
15 hours later he was dead,
homicide victim #102.

16, and a liscenced driver he
never got to old to kiss
his big sister,
gave his mother \$100 from his
hospital earnings saying
"Buy yourself some new clothes."

Mourners spilled from the doors of
Bethesda Baptist Church
teenage girls sobbed,
boys shook their heads in disbelief.
Limbo's parents
stood beside the pale blue coffin
gazing at their boy in the Chicago Bulls cap
remembering,
the long lashes, the smooth skin.
Both kissed him,
then sank into a pew to weep
until gentle hands
steered them away.

Antoinette M. Jackson

Bullet In The Wind With No Intent

Did U C it
I saw it
The bullet that flew
Yes oh yes right in between me & U

I felt the wind
That made us spin
Hey girl U know someone's lookin' out 4 U
U better believe I prayed 2 God 2

That boy right behind us
The 1 that robbed Jimmy Dusk
That's who they were aiming 4
I knew we shoulda never walked out the door

What if we died
And left our parents behind
They would cry & cry
All because we died

What's that on my shirt
Is it blood nah just dirt
Should brown turn 2 red
No, no I think I'm dead

How could this B happening 2 me
I'm only nineteen
Ready enjoy life
But now loosing life

Help me help me
I can't C
Death is all around
Oh no I think I'm hell bound

Oh please can't I have a chance
Someone call the ambulance
I hear the sirens
I hear the sirens
Here they come
Hurry up B4 I'm done

Surgery takes place
If only I could C the look
 On my own face

All sewed up
 Now I'm ready 2 get up

But wait I can't move
Even though I hear Justice's Groove
I can talk
 I can C
 I can hear
But all I'm feelin' is fear

They say it will take time
 & the ability of my mind

I gotta pull through
 Just 4 me
 & not just 4 U

Ebony Tanner

Your Time Is Now

African woman
African woman

With your head held high
If only they knew how U feel inside

R U a timid, weak rat
Or as strong as a battle ax

In your eyes I C the desire
2 show your hot burning fire

Speak your mind
Don't waste time

The years have passed
Now it's time 2 raise your flask

U have been slashed and beat
But beautiful brilliant bold black woman rise
2 your feet.

Your time is now
So just lay your logic down

U feel it in your soul
So go ahead girl an' B bold

Ebony Tanner

Bathing the Body, Relaxing the Soul

I love to sit on the floor
 of my room, relaxed, listening to music
Right after a bath, wet hair
 clinging in strips to my bare back
Like playful little children
I love to feel the bath water
 sink into my skin, just for one moment
Smoothing out the worry lines that
 dance across my face so frequently
My skin is soft and pliable, muscles stretched

At this time, conflicting feelings erase
 with the exception of wanting to be alone
and wanting someone to be here, too,
 Appreciating my body as I do
In this one moment.

Rose Wethe

Untitled

Everything that was Her was here,
before.

She decorated and remodeled the little stone house
to perfection, to Her. It was here,
before.

When I saw it, She had died. Her home remained:
 delicate roses dancing across the wallpaper
 creamy smooth kitchen, big enough for her mammoth lasagne
 quiet bedroom, cozy, to shelter Her literary adventures

I missed her, reveled in the fact that She lived on,
In Her home, that was here,
before.

Back in Missouri for school, I travel across a calmer river
But my heart is anything but calm as I see
Her house, now just a house.

The angry waters came and tore Her all away—
Tore away Her home, the way it had been
And made it the way it is now.

Mu Oma's body's in the grave still, not unlike this house,
Decayed and empty,
The flood ripped the last of Her soul away.

Rose Wethe



Lisa Geeting

Eyes of My Sister

Both eyes look at me...
Throughout my life, they have looked, watched
me with care, with cunning, and with interest
One is icy, crystalline blue
An ocean roaring inside, underneath a gaze
Somehow untroubled by the water or the sky
One deep, lush green
A jungle, creatures roaming wild, untamed
Yet peace deeply felt like a solitary spring meadow
The eyes of my sister are the mirrors
for the halves of her heart
One powder blue, One forest green
One critical, judging, logically icy
One open, emotional, feeling its growth
Therefore I am wary of my actions
Always asking
Which eye watches me now?

Rose Wethe

There are about a million things I am supposed to be doing with my life

right now.

You aren't one of them

And yet you pull me in.

How could you, how could you

Kiss me

Brutal passionate violent

heated suffocating kiss

Even now, a day later and a lot wiser,

I feel your eager fingers digging

Pulling, bruising, deep into the flesh of my neck.

Your mouth went over mine and I thought

"I am being eaten alive!"

I didn't struggle. I wanted to kiss you first,

Remember?

I can feel a tingling through my brittle bones

Your name evokes passion and hatred

You fucking prick.

How could you, how could you

Kiss me,

Kiss me like that,

And say "Just wanted to know what it'd be like."

Rose Wethe

But He Came

Anger It tears me up inside I have no heart
Go away Go away I have no place for you
Heart of steel Its walls cannot be broken down
Broken down Building up Under watch of my eye
Innocence angered

But he came. . .

Hurt Afraid to let others touch you No No I do
not know you I do not know myself Persistence
Closer Closer I cannot stop it Alone No one there
Innocence hurt

But he came. . .

Pain I'm not ready Trust me Trust I do
I don't I cannot breathe Deeper Deeper
Choking and gasping Deeper Deeper Inside
Innocence lost

But he came. . .

Sadness You do not know me Gone Gone Taken
away Did you like it? Next time will be better
Better? I cannot see Wash Wash It will
not go away Stained I care for you I cannot
Innocence saddened

He left.

Jay Meyer

The Last Haul

As we drive down the service road to the city dump in Brian's beat-up Chevy pick-up, a hundred buried memories are stirring inside my mind, ready to surface at any given moment. We arrive at the toll booth and pay the \$7.00 dumping fee for the third time today. Instead of greeting us as old friends, the woman in the small cubicle is just as hasty as she was the first time, "Got any large appliances or hazardous waste in there under that tarp?" she asks.

"No, ma'am, we sure don't," lies Bruce, my cousin-in-law. We actually have an ancient washing machine and some 30-year-old jarred pickles that would probably be considered as toxic. Brian drives over to a semi-flat, clear area, turns off the ignition and pulls the emergency brake. On either side of me, he and Bruce put their work gloves on, preparing to clear, throw, fling, shovel and sweep out all the "crap" piled high behind us. Having rehearsed for this grand finale twice already today, they simultaneously open their respective doors, step down out of the cab and hoist themselves up and into the bed of the truck, thankful that this is the last haul.

As they begin heaving lawn and leaf bags filled with things that once meant something to my grandmother into the abyss of garbage surrounding us, I remain sitting in the truck, oblivious to the tears that stream down my face. For over thirty years she been collecting, saving, hoarding this "crap," as the demolition crew (my dad, mom, cousin, aunts and uncles) back at the house so fondly refer to it.

"Why in the hell was mom saving this shit?" My dad, Aunt Kathy and Aunt Maureen repeatedly ask each other. At the same time, however, I think they are enjoying finding their report cards from grade school, love letters from Uncle Greg's old flame, a nasty note from Sister O'Brady concerning Aunt Maureen's behavior and library books that were due twenty-eight years ago. There are doctor and hospital bills, greeting cards, newspaper clippings, important looking files and documents from my grandfather's business, and deposit and withdrawal slips from decades ago. Before carrying out my orders to throw all these things in a large, brown trash bag, I sift through the mound of dusty papers, perhaps hoping to find the answer to an unsolved family mystery no one knew existed.

What I really want, though, is an explanation as to why everybody is acting so nonchalant about this. *Gramma is dead*—no, she's still alive in all our hearts, but she's *gone*, and all this stuff was hers. It still *is* hers. It meant something to her. And after how many hours has it been so easily discarded of, left to rot and mingle with baby diapers, soup cans and old tennis shoes in the Adams County dump? They seem to have no problem getting rid of the things that some of their memories were made of. Although my mother and I are Jewish, I cringe when she puts the fake Christmas tree in a pile destined to go upstairs, out the back door and in the truck. "You're throwing that away?" I ask her, and a lump forms in my throat.

"Well, yeah. What are we going to do with it? Besides, it's older than dirt; nobody else wants it."

Soon, the entire basement is cleared, and my dad hoses down the walls and ceiling. Thirty years' worth of cobwebs and dustballs come crashing down under the weight of the water and run toward the drain in the center of the room. The section of the basement was unfinished, darkened by the cold, gray cement walls, with only a single drawstring light; my cousins and I used to dare each other to come in here at night. With the exception of the pool table that my cousins and I used to play "house" underneath, all the furniture in the other room with its checkered floor, wood paneling and giant nature photomural has been loaded up in the truck.

Everything is gone. The "ugly, outdated" Christmas tree ornaments, the spices and pickling salts and cleaning agents in tins and containers that are now collector's items, the umpteen jars of pickles that were canned before my grandfather, whom I never knew, died in 1967, and kitchen gadgets that can now only be found in antique shops are all being dusted or emptied and washed off in preparation for display on shelves in the homes of my various relatives.

The back of the pick-up is now empty, but it still reeks of the pickles whose jar broke open on the way to the dump. Bruce and Brian get back in the truck, and ask me if I'd seen how far they'd thrown the vacuum and the tires. I want to scream at them, slap them and tell them they have no right to turn my grandmother's death into a newly invented sporting event, but instead I hide my tears and anger behind the hankerchief provided to me for masking the stench of the garbage. Brian starts the truck, and it slowly trudges over the compacted waste.

Sitting in between Bruce and Brian, I turn my head to look in the back of the truck; I see a tiny piece of a bough from the Christmas tree caught in the tailgate. Before I can open my mouth to request that Brian stop the truck so that it can be rescued, we are picking up speed and soon we are on the highway. At forty-five...fifty...sixty-five miles an hour, the artificial pine branch is whipping in the wind. It wants to be free, but I silently pray that it will hang on until we get back to the house. We are almost to the city limit, and as we merge off the highway the branch escapes into the wind but not before waving...farewell.

Jamie Bolger

Remembering Winters Past

"Is it gonna snow
today?" asks the small boy,
looking out the window to the east.
"How would I know?" the girl
retorts. She is reminded of the past
and doesn't want the role of mother.

If she were here, their mother
could predict the second snow
of January just by looking past
the willow trees the boy's
grandmother planted as a girl.
"Rain in the southwest, snow in the northeast

and a tornado in the midwest, just east
of Goodland," their beautiful mother
would rattle off, and the girl,
nodding her head, would pray for snow
to fall in their region as well so the boy
and she could run past

the post office, through the dry creek and past
the car wash to the hills where the eastern
born winds would set down the first flakes. The boy
would stick out his tongue as his mother
showed him and try to taste the snow
that he and the girl

had run so hard and fast to meet. The girl
would then sprint back past
the car wash, comparing the amount of snow-
fall to that on the hill. From the east
the sky would grow dark and their mother
would silently summon the girl and boy

to return home. The boy
would pretend not to have heard, but the girl
would take his hand and back to mother
they'd march, returning the way they came, going past
the post office just as the eastern
skies opened up, letting loose January's second snow.

"That was mother's job —to predict the snow,"
says the somber girl to the curious boy
as she looks toward the east, remembering the past.

Jamie Bolger



Sarah Resnick

There Was a Black Girl

Speaker (A young boy)

There was a black girl, dark and sweet
She always wore white socks and black shoes to church
She had tight curly plaits all over her head
She wore ribbons and barrets some blue some red

There was a black girl, dark and sweet
She played in the school yard and swung high in the swings
She jumped so high all the boys could see her underwear
She was bold, funny, and always expected a dare

There was a black girl, dark and sweet
She came to my party and brought a present for me
She danced so wild and sang so loud
She was the token of my eye and entertained the crowd

There was a black girl, dark and sweet
She road her bicycle and skated after school
She road through the alley, the park, and by my house
She never saw me looking or heard me, for I was quiet as a mouse

There was a black girl, dark and sweet
She gave me a card on Valentine's Day and I gave her some candy
She kissed me on my cheek and gave me a hug
She talked and laughed with her friends every time she looked at me
She smiled at me so sweetly she blew me off my feet

There was a black girl, dark and sweet
She moved away in December and broke my heart
She promised to write soon and send lots of love
She was the angel of my heart sent to me from above

Of course she never wrote me back
Till this day I can't forget her and still blow kisses in the air at night
Maybe she'll catch one someday and remember me, she might

Jessica Williams

We Thank God for the Day You Were Born

Little brown baby, chubby and sweet
come sit upon momma's lap and I'll rock you to sleep

Momma's breast will be your cushion

Her heart beat your invisible drum

While you sleep and dream and slumber
in your mother's gentle arms.

Oh Lord thank you for my baby thank you for my child
sleeping here in my tired arms that have...

swept from dawn till noon

cut up greens and massaged masses of fresh dough

combed five nappy heads and braided rows of plaits

All scarred and bent and knotted yet my baby loves my
hands

They show her dignity, honesty and rugged affection for
discipline.

Through her, life in me is born again and dreams linger on hope

God will pull her through each darksome path

be an anchor for a chaotic ship

God will lift her foot above troubled waters just as he
did Peter's.

In her, my dreams are embellished with certainty that she will
do

everything her heart desires if she'll only let God lead the way.

Young, beautiful woman powerful and proud
give to me the remedy to bury this gruesome shroud
It's dark and gray and ugly but it's the holder of my
dreams
All buried in deep emptiness
Shrunken hopes
False dreams
But how have you overcome with few speckles and few
complaints?
You dreamed a dream and captured it, molding it into
a portrait of yourself..
a companion, a husband, a child
Speak! Speak! great wonderer, creative artist. For you host
many given talents and deep passions.
I wish to exemplify some of your actions
Enter into some of your thoughts
Attract some of your strength
And inhale your promising words.
On behalf of those who love you and beseech that the Lord be
with you on this day
we'd like to say
WE THANK GOD FOR THE DAY YOU WERE BORN!
Through the inspiration of God

Jessica Williams

The Narrow and Wide Gates

13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

Matthew 7: 13-14

Bushes and branches sharp, dried up and discolored
have long since established a hiding place in the
darkened, heavy mist created to camouflage
the pain of their prickling weapons from every blinded
traveler who has found a way into their apathetic
territory.

The trees, old and feeble to any frost or harsh wind
bend towards the ground, not in reverence of the Lord
but in the absence of their youth.
Tracks of forgotten footsteps and treasures of the ancient
are buried deep beneath the weeds and hard ground.
This path my friend is the traitor of the hearts that have
sought its promise and leadership.
Forsaken are the wise and righteous who proclaim
Jesus as their Savior, but Satan as their shepherd
Lead through troubled waters, sinking into sin, climbing
over sharp rocks high in the mountains, and never
reaching
the top, linger the wicked.

Destiny is a trap, but in the eyes of fools it is a luxury, an
unexplainable high.
Men with leprosy have crossed over this path shedding
their disease into
the morose sorrow and anguish.
Women with the spikes protruding from their heart and
filth spilling
from their mouths, walk along side their lovers in
garments of
purple and labels with adulteress written on their
foreheads.
Children whose minds were coaxed by the devil and
nurtured by his
lies, cry out to the Lord to rescue them from these sad
conditions
prepared by their odious master, but GOD does not

listen to
the ignorance and folly that escapes from their mouth.
Evidently great majesties and people of nobility have trodden
through this very path accompanied by the foolish and arrogant
enemies of the Lord, forever condemned to the chains of
poverty on the soul and freed of GOD'S undying mercy.
Here in this spot stomped the hoofs of mighty horses that carried
the
weight of Pharaohs army as they sprinted to death in the water,
the Red sea, rebuked by GOD to split in half, forming a way for
his people, the Israelites, to cross over.
Swarms of desolate souls came trampling under the command of
their
deceiver, whom is jealous of GOD and a foe to his word.
Masters and their slaves, both hand in hand, both blinded by their
wicked ways; one exchanges his soul for greed the other for
revenge, and both are swallowed up into a deep obscure pit
built on the grave of the fallen angel who consumes their souls
with blazing fire and eternal darkness.
Footsteps here, footsteps there, everywhere, some buried under
the ashes and bones of the dead, others imprint chaotic
distress and adventures of those who dared to escape high in
the mountains and low in the valleys.
My friend I must warn you to search your minds and hearts today
because many of us unaware of traveling towards this emptiness
this place of no rest and no peace.
My friend you have and still fail to realize that GOD has all power
here on this earth and throughout the infinity of his universe.
In the beginning was GOD, a merciful GOD, a kind GOD, a GOD
without any blemish of sin, yet you hate him and despise him.
From his breath came all life, we, mere sinful humans have been
GOD'S greatest and most cherished creation of all time.
Here, on this path roses dance and bloom in the sight of the Lord,
weeds can not grow in his pure soil and pests do not destroy.
Trees from the ancient neither reveal age nor ruin, but bow all so
gracefully in reverence to their planter and supplier.
From the sandy ground seeps water that sustains life and purifies
what is unclean.
Treasures left behind by the Lord's great followers and servants
stand,
lay, sit in their place of rest where no dust nor moths corrupt.
Garments of the righteous exhibit splendor and awesome wonder,
for they have been washed in the blood of the lamb, Jesus.
Along this glorious path few footsteps indicated the meager
number

of travelers who have sought refuge in the Lord's word.
Some have stumbled and others have fallen but each time they
were
lifted back to their feet again and compelled to their destiny
by the grace of the Lord.

Sweet holiness, wholesome fullness covers the souls of all
believers through the body of Christ, in which salvation,
forgiveness, and the spirit of his Father reigns, pouring out
light to guide the direction of his followers and love to
console their burden hearts and souls.

At the gate sin is shed from a believer, they die to their old way
of life and are made alive in Christ again.

The desires of his old nature are laid to rest and only awoken
when
Satan sneaks into his heart and feeds it lies and thoughts that
are
not at all part of GOD, causing men to stumble and fall into
the grave in which they face the ugliness and turmoil of the
their dead nature.

GOD did not deceive them, forget them, and forsake them
GOD gave them the Holy Spirit and the privilege of being
a heir to his everlasting riches.

In GOD there is always reassurance and hope for today and
tomorrow.

He will come one day in all his splendor and glory to take all of
his
children home.

No longer will they depend on the buildings of man to protect
and
shelter them, for soon they will be broken down into a million
pieces.

No longer will they thirst or hunger for earthly nourishment
and
fullness, for soon GOD'S spirit will make them eternally
contented.

No more death, no more sorrow.

But my friend, he may come today, only the Father of Christ
knows.

Please take heed to the message the Lord has set before you.
Look to the word and pray for understanding and patience as
you
seek him.

Seek him earnestly and he will hear you because GOD loves
you.

Don't seek the approval and praise of men when GOD leads you to the

narrow gate.

Few are chosen but many are invited.

The anguish of the world is not because GOD looked away but
men turned from
him.

Narrow is the gate, straight is the path and victorious is the
journey.

THROUGH THE INSPIRATION OF GOD

Jessica Williams

Masquerade of the Devil

The devil;
dark man sometimes,
visits me in sleep,
I don't welcome him.
He takes hold of my thoughts,
controls my dreams
-no escape on the (phantom) rollercoaster of insanity
The apparitions of never-land
are stow-aways on the boxcar I ride
through the tunnel of consciousness.
In sleep, I die a million deaths.
To wake in no reconciliation-
the devil stays with me
I don't welcome him
I glance to the mirror, and can almost see
the face of he who torments me.
He sends his followers to whisper sweet nothings
into my ear. — Will my ear fall off?
The devil — so familiar.
I see him just turning around the
corner as I reach it.
But he slips into a crevice
and waits for me to pass.
Footsteps,
He is the man stalking me
He comes into my room; the door was locked.
I'm sitting on my bed;
he comes to me
I don't welcome him
He wraps around my body —
I'm in his grip.
He whispers in my left ear,
"Why not?"

Sundew Prindle

Siege

Foolish German man
Leo
You are a lost soul
Always scheming—
looking for an easy way out
Self-indulgence, self-pity
are what you call love
Blind boy
You need a wife who will take care of you
Submit to you
Never leave you
You will have many
curly-haired children
each inheriting those cold grey eyes—
Grey eyes that I saw as green;
sometimes blue
Maybe it was the dominant chin,
with a cleft I could put my finger in,
that deceived me
Your once radiant disposition
Diffused by your satiation
to dull ash hardness
Mexican Cancer woman
sensitized into my shell
Slowly cutting myself off from you
And others
Building a concrete bastion
Made of my insides—
leaving me hollow
Under seige

Sundew Prindle

Guilt

I cry for no good reason,
but I still cannot stop because also
I cry for those who cannot
and sometimes I cry because I am sad or
I cry because I am furious at myself and the world
and I cry because I am never alone when I need to be,
but I never cry in public.
I cry for myself.

I cry because if I do not
I think I will go insane and
I cry because it is a weakness and
sometimes I need to feel weak because I cry when
I hate being strong
and I reject caring when I am not because
I cry after everybody else is done
and I am savagely enraged because now I must cry alone.
I cry for Mom.

I cry when I am happy because
I am guilty for feeling when I know
others cannot and the feelings just
keep coming and I cry because I
cannot stop myself from feeling or
from crying when it gives me release that
I do not deserve because I am still here.
Yet, I cry because I do not want to be.

I cry for my Dad.

I cry because I cannot stop
and I am not sure I ever want to
because when I cry I cannot
clearly see the picture that remains lifeless
behind the glass plate of a picture frame because
he cannot be anything but a picture on my wall
or in my mind or a weightless box that rests,
hidden, but clearly exposed beneath the table.
I cry for Michael.

I cry because guilt is rage and I laugh so
that everybody knows I am still here when
I would rather be anywhere else except
for alone because I cry when we are apart,
and I cry for the reasons you give me to
stay where I am when I cannot even see your face
so that I can tell if you miss me because
I have left you alone with a weightless box and a feeling of guilt.
I cry for Johnnie.

I cry for yesterday and the day before when
I had everything I needed but I could not see
because I was standing too close and
then everything was gone and I cry because
I am afraid and the fear is there
and it never leaves, so
I cry because I am cold and
I am not sure what I should do and I do not know
if I want to be warm because then I cry for feeling warm
when I know
I should feel cold.
I cry for release.

Brenda Campbell

Grief

I can still feel the hot grains of sun bleached sand
squeeze sensuously between my toes
The overwhelming heat of the late afternoon sun
beats down upon my back
Filling my whole body with an incredible sense
of warmth and security.

The whispering echo of salty water
lapping peacefully up to the isolated beach
Vibrates in my mind
lulling me into a lethargic state of rest
There is nothing in the wide horizon
to disturb me or my drifting thoughts
Except for the occasional cry of the lone gull
ravenously seeking nourishment
The glaring sun glistens in the pellucid blue sky
in a blinding display of white light
The water teases the cliffs
that jut from the shore.

As I reluctantly withdraw
from my own personal paradise
I look back and see my footprints
embedded in the smooth sand
It reminds me of a time
when there was another set of footprints
Along side my own.

Brenda S. Campbell

happy birthday

mom says i have plenty of time
you aren't due home for hours
but i want everything to be perfect
special
from the blue streamers dotted with with balloons
to the chocolate cake iced with buttercreme frosting
your favorite
i place your gifts in a row
then a stack
then a pyramid
i change into my red velour party dress
and imagine you telling your friends what a wonderful daughter
you have
hours pass
i grow tired
of waiting
the cake has hardened and the crepe paper hangs limply
slamming, stammering, stumbling
you arrive home
with one hand you hit the cake
with the other you hit me
even though its your birthday
i find i am the one wishing

Miranda Smith

Barbie

Blue eyes sparkling
Blonde mane flowing
Pretty, Perfect, Petite.
Wanted by all the guys
Admired by all the girls
For once i'd like to shock them
Crop my hair, dye it purple
Tattoo a dragon on my back and a snake on my breast
Throw away my peach high heels in favor of black Doc Martens
Wear crimson crushed velvet, crotchless panties, and thigh-high
boots
Frequent bondage clubs, backrooms, and porn theatres
Forget playing house, I want to play in smoky barrooms,
Drink Jack Daniels like it's water
Smoke pot and pop pills
Ride a motorcycle
Fuck G.I. joe on the pink satin sheets of my heart-shaped dream
bed
Kiss Skipper - mouths open, tongues touching
And tell all the others they can go to hell.

Miranda Smith

Chloe

Outside Chole honks impatiently, and I stifle the urge to yell out a profanity. She's only thirty minutes late, which by her standards, is the epitome of punctuality. I push aside the living room drapes, tangling my hair on the goddamned macrame plant holder my mother insists on displaying in the picture window. I mouth the words "just a minute bitch" and am greeted with the traditional response—one middle finger, straight up. I grab my bag, also macramed by my mother, and recall how Chloe and I became friends.

It isn't that odd of a pairing. We're very much alike. Growing up, we both worshipped Shaun Cassidy, aspired to be airline stewardesses, and dressed in legwarmers. This was before I discovered I liked intellectual men, despised flying, and was told I looked skinny in anything close-fitting. We met in parochial school in the third grade. We both had Sister Cassidy, who we were positive was related to our old flame Shaun. Sister Cassidy liked us, as much as a nun can like two girls who are more interested in breaking rules than breaking bread. We survived private school. When Chloe got her license she developed her punctuality problem. She always claimed nothing started until we got there, but I didn't believe we were as cool as she thought. We were late everywhere anyway.

So now we're driving and singing along to Depeche Mode, a group we've adored since junior high. When we started listening to Depeche Mode we also took up smoking and now we can't seem to break either habit. We're smoking and driving, and Chloe is discussing how she's sure Martin Gore, the singer, is bisexual and we're all bisexual to some degree. I'm nodding absentmindedly because I'd really rather be somewhere else and my ring is caught in the macrame of my bag. We're ditching school, sixth hour Theatre History, to get tickets to a concert in San Diego. I like Chloe because she's a free spirit—with her, I can go anywhere, and we often do. Of course, things don't always turn out as we plan.

We end up in the bad section of Las Vegas, because that's where the tickets are being sold and Chloe likes to flirt with danger anyway. The man who sells us our tickets is wearing a shirt illustrated with cartoon dogs in various sexual positions. He has sweat rings and a beer belly and keeps leering at Chloe, which makes me laugh as Chloe is more inclined to hit on the woman answering phones, who is petite and dark-haired. We leave for the parking lot and Chloe's car, which isn't difficult

to find as it's painted fuschia with white daisies. It isn't difficult to find her keys either—they're locked in the car.

The situation would be funny except I've noticed that the man with the sweat rings is still ogling us, and a street person has begun to make his way toward us. He looks American Indian and his skin is weathered from the sun but still a glorious bronze color. He introduces himself as Windwalker, and Chloe says her name is Streetwalker and I kick her. Windwalker chooses to ignore her and stares intently at me. He tells me he spent time in prison and says I look like his wife. I silently hope she's not the reason he went to prison. He asks why we're standing on a corner in downtown Las Vegas, and I tell him I am wondering the same thing. Chloe explains we've locked our keys in the car, and I resent the implication that I had something to do with the situation. Windwalker says he can't be of much help, but he does explain how to blow up a car, which I guess is our other option if we can't get the keys out. He tells us to take a ping pong ball, fill it with bleach using a syringe, and place it in our victim's gas tank. I don't question the scientific validity of the procedure, as I figure prison must teach you something. Just then, Sweat Rings comes out carrying a coat hanger. For a minute I think he might wield it as a weapon, but then I remember that coat hangers often unlock car doors. He leans over our door, and breathing heavily, begins to jimmy the lock. I watch him breathing and sweating and am fascinated by the dogs on his shirt. He is moving so much that they really do look like they're fucking. Momentarily, we're back in the car and waving goodbye to Windwalker and Sweat Rings. Actually, Chloe is waving goodbye and I am telling her to stop encouraging them. She laughs and tells me to give her a cigarette. I mouth the words "just a minute bitch" and am greeted with the traditional response—one middle finger, straight up.

Miranda Smith

Dreams of My Father

The dream is frequent even if your visits aren't...
You're dressed in the newest suits
Smiling the oldest smiles
You regale me with tales, some tall, some true,
Of places you've visited.
Vegas, with its easy money and easy women,
Florida, where you basked in the sun.
You hand me trinkets from each stop,
And I pretend to be thrilled that you remembered me,
But such gifts just make me want to forget you more.
I hurl the leather wallet with its handstitched fringe and beaded
design at your head
You stare at me in disbelief
I call you all the names I've only muttered under my breath...
Bastard, Deserter, Dad
You realize your disappearances haven't gone unnoticed,
And your cheating hasn't gone unseen.
Your smile vanishes as quickly as you do.

Miranda Smith

Bowl

Every Firday night we bowl. It's been a tradition of ours for years. When I was younger we even wore matching shirts, but that was before I realized how dumb we looked. My stepdad Ron still wears his shirt, his name embroidered in royal blue thread against a light blue background. Maybe if the shirts were a cool color, like purple or magenta, I'd still wear one. I suggested this to Ron but he said he felt more comfortable in the blue. I wanted to tell him that the shirt makes him look like a big pale blueberry with hair, but he'd probably only laugh in that annoying way of his, head back, teeth bared. Ron has the largest teeth I've ever seen—huge white planks. I only bowl with Ron and my mother for the sake of the family unit. When my mom divorced my father six years ago and married Ron and His Teeth, I vowed to have nothing to do with them. But then my mother started taking these parenting courses, which I felt was bad timing on her part as I was already grown and my sister Bitsy was a lost cause anyway, but she thought a counselor could help. We went with her to one of those sessions, and Dr. Rooter, who looked a lot like Richard Simmons, told us that we needed to behave as a family unit. My mother kept nodding until I thought her head would fall off. I just kept picturing Dr. Rooter in a flamboyant jogging suit leading aerobics with a bunch of fat women. But I guess Ron and His Teeth took him seriously enough, as that was the impetus for Family Bowling Night. And so I go along with it, for the sake of the family unit, and because we always get free food at the bowling alley. Everyone knows bowling alley food is the best on earth. Bitsy goes along because she always does whatever I want, and I want her to suffer along with me.

Tonight is no exception. I can hear Ron whistling in the bedroom as he hunts for his bowling shirt in the closet. Soon he will knock on my door, and announce that I'd better get "the show on the road" or something equally cliched and cheesy. My mother is downstairs in the living room, probably sneaking shots of Wild Turkey from the liquor cabinet. On Fridays, she contributes more to the family unit if she's sloshed. Of course, Ron and His Teeth never know she's plastered, they just think she's in a good mood and excited at the prospect of a night of bowling fun.

I check to see if Bitsy's ready. Tonight she's wearing red courderoy pants, a yellow t-shirt and her purple cape and tiara. I like her outfit much better than Ron's shirt. She's drawing

when I come in and doesn't look up at me; she doesn't look at anyone much anymore. I wait for her to finish coloring, and she follows me silently down the stairs. Ron and Hie Teeth are pacing the foyer and the scent of his Old Spice cologne chokes me. He grins at me, and all I see are teeth. My mother is leaning against the bannister for support.

Our first few games go well. Ron is winning, and sweat stains have begun to form under the armpits of his baby blue bowling shirt. My mother has ordered her "second drink" of the night, which by my calculations, makes her dead drunk. Bitsy sits on one of the plastic orange chairs, singing softly to herself. Looking at her, it is hard to believe she beat up a girl in her class. School bullies usually don't wear purple capes and tiaras. I've already loaded up on snack bar food—two hot dogs, a chocolate chip cookie, a hot pretzel, and a lemon cola.

Ron is up to bowl again. He's standing still, concentrating on his shot. His butt muscles clench and the bowling alley lights play tricks with this bald spot. Finally, he shoots the ball and gets a strike. He turns and smiles, his teeth glistening. He raises his hands in a triumphant gesture, and that's when I do it. I pick up Bitsy's ball, the purple one, and with all my strength I hurl it at Ron and His Teeth. It hits him in the face and his grin disappears as he falls onto his back. I look at my mother, clutching her mixed drink. I look at Bitsy, whose eyes won't meet mine. I look at Ron sprawled out on lane 32. "Strike," I say, and turn and walk away.

Miranda Smith

Perhaps

I catch a yawn that comes from the table across from me.
I hear a laugh from the couple in the corner
And a "checkmate" from somewhere among the clinking glasses
And I think...

Perhaps we will try to drink coffee together
amidst Bach's water-dance of oboe and harpsichord
and sunshine autumn horns, over and over,
inside the seclusion of outside.

Perhaps our nostrils will be overwhelmed
by the alarmingly fresh, underground scent
of the dark ground bean,
an abundance of aroma.

Perhaps this will cause us to think deep thoughts.
Perhaps Bach's strings will inspire us.

Perhaps we will acknowledge each other's existence or
Perhaps it will seem we are too enraptured
in our own existence to acknowledge others.

Perhaps we are reaching out, wordlessly, pushing
through the Aged Sumantra and Cinnamon-spiced
nutmeg,
with our noses buried in our own secretive
papers in front of us.

Perhaps we will chat about the weather
that is framed by the big glass window
and a dark green canopy,
with the breeze moving the silent trees
to the tune of the underlying intense winding tune
of the Barochian strings.

Perhaps life will go by us outside and
Perhaps we will be safe,
for a few quiet moments, in here,
with the Columbian scents of Mocha Java and Irish
Creme.

Perhaps we will connect at the counter
as we pour brown crystals into our steaming cups

of the dark liquid which we will then pour into our
selves.

Perhaps it will wake us up.
Perhaps we will see things clearer.

Perhaps this drink will bring us knowledge, profound
insight,
religious revelations, or simply
help us consume the newsworthy tidbits of commentary
which feeds our brains with meaningless aspects of life,
right here, inside, away from the outside
that is passing us by, through the windows,
beneath our canopy.

Perhaps we know something they don't.
Perhaps they know something we don't,
out there in their cars, on their bicycles,
walking briskly past, to the tune of their own music.

Perhaps I will feel it all, passing through my right
kidney.

Perhaps all this java is simply a bit of insincere hype.
Perhaps it is here to stay.
Perhaps it always has been.

Perhaps I will soon dance quickly out through the glass
doors
into the fast approaching autumn sunshine.

Traven Rice

Homemade Apple Pie

"Oh, God,! You're cooking." Colleen places her briefcase at the door jam.

"Well, good evening to you too," a voice floats out from behind the refrigerator.

"What are you cooking?" Colleen carefully steps over broken egg shells and flour trying not to slip. "It looks like you are having a battle with the food and the food is winning. What did you do now?" Colleen says picking up a slightly brown apple slice from the bowl.

"What?"

"Kate, come on, level with me. You only bake an apple pie when you have done something wrong."

"I do not. It was a bad arts and crafts day at school." Kate appears from behind the refrigerator carrying a stick of butter.

"Let me remind you, good friend. Does the name Chuck Sulewski ring a bell? Remember when we were fifteen and wrote pornographic notes and placed them on his garage door and his parents found them? Or how about the time we were in high school and you put shaving cream and condoms all over Mrs. Huges' car. Every time you get in trouble, you make an apple pie, so what have you done now?"

"We have been friends too long."

"Since our sophomore year in high school. Aren't you glad that I have such a good memory." Colleen smirks.

"Not really." Kate scans the kitchen floor for any left-over flour. "Do you see any flour?"

"Well, it looks like most of it has made it on the floor rather than the bowl."

"Very funny. No, nothing terrible has happened. I just felt like baking."

"You don't bake."

"Yes, I do." Kate drops two eggs onto the floor.

"Yea, o,k., Kate, your hair is filled with goo and you have turned our apartment into a war zone." Colleen begins to pick the goo out of Kate's auburn hair.

"Colleen, Charlie is coming over tonight." Kate turns on the mixer.

"What did you do to our mixer?" Colleen yells.

"Nothing. It has always made that sound. Hasn't it?" Kate states, turning off the mixer.

Dusting off a stool, Colleen sits down. "O.K. here it

comes. What did you do?" Colleen is becoming impatient with her margarita drinking, billiard playing, roommate.

"Well, you know his cat, the one I have been taking care of while he has been out of town? I killed it."

"You killed Spencer! That cat means the world to him."

"I know. I don't know what I did. I left him perfectly fine the night before. And when I went back this morning, Spencer just lay there not moving. I thought he was just in a deep sleep; I don't know anything about cats. When I called his name, he didn't move. I started to fix his food, which always wakes him up, and..."

"He still didn't move. I got it. The cat is dead. So, how are you going to tell Charlie? You don't honestly believe that an apple pie will solve everything." Colleen pops off the top of a Miller Light.

"I would really appreciate it if you weren't here tonight. It is not going to be pretty when I tell Charlie what I have done to his cat."

"Where do you want me to go?" Colleen can't believe what she is hearing. Kate is intelligent but she seems to do the dumbest things.

"Go to Micheal's."

"I can't. He is out of town."

"O.K. Call Sarah, Jen, or Beth?"

"Sarah is in the Arctic researching flying fish. She wants to find out why they freeze in mid air. Beth is still in D.C. and Jen has her A.A. meeting tonight. Any other bright ideas?"

"O.K. Go to Denny's. Here is a pack of cigarettes and a buck for coffee." Kate, frustrated, pulls out a cigarette box from the sugar bowl.

Colleen doesn't question why the cigarettes were in the sugar bowl, but just dusts them off and looks at Kate. "You know you would be better off if you slept with Jim from the History department or even Dr. Brooker, the principal."

"Thanks, you are a lot of help. First of all, I would never sleep with Dr. Booker and Jim is no Italian lover."

"Well, I will go, but mind you not happily." Colleen slides off the stool.

"You owe me any ways for all lthe times I was there for you." Kate smiles.

"Yea. Well, good luck. You know what. If I were you I would make two apple pies. One for him to eat and one to throw in your face."

"Go away!" Kate throws a hand full of flour into Colleen's face.

Colleen heads for the door, laughing, picking up her briefcase along the way. Kate returns to her crust, which now she is kneading.

Tracy Hamm



Adrienne Fore

The Night Before I Left

You call in desperation
You call to tell me
You have been raped.
This happened the night before I left.

While I was dreaming
You were being violated
While I was joking with peers
You were playing What if?
While I was eating
You were confessing your pain.
This happened the night before I left.

While I sit, waiting
You are tortured by the doctors' machines.
While I comfort your mother
You sit alone in a cold ER room.
While I smoke
You cry.
This happened the night before I left.

Now we are apart
And there is nothing we can do.
If I could
I would take the pain away
I would take the nightmare away
I would take the hurt away
I would...
Do anything.

But I can't.
All I can do is listen
And wait for you to call.
Hoping to hear you laugh, again.
Hoping to hear that you are all right.

I wish this never happened.
I want to hold you
And tell you that everything will be o.k.
But, I can't.
Blondy Blond
I wish I was you
So you wouldn't have to hurt anymore.

Tracy Hamm

For Lynn

Let art bring glory to God.

Let purity dwell within the children of the King.

Let art reflect the nature of holiness.

Let the righteous exalt His creation and create.

Let the creative ones love purity, holiness and righteousness.

Lord teach us to glorify your holy name with skills you have given us.

Laura Marker

Sometimes a Thought

Sometimes a thought searches for a resting place.
A thought without definition, without clarification,
Wrapped in the vagueness of memory and feeling.
Sometimes a thought embraces me unaware with the warmth of
remembered wheat fields.
Sometimes a thought casts its shadow of gloom, opening up the
sadness of past wounds.
Sometimes a thought glides upon the heights of joyous song and
reveals to me yet another unknown part of you.

Laura Marker

Forever Grateful

Wandering around blind and unaware,
You gave me sight and pulled me from the land of my own
making.
Desiring fulfillment amongst the unfulfilled,
You gave me water and quenched my eternal thirst.
Singing the song of the formless void,
You gave me a new song whose angelic language laughs with
the wind.
Searching for my other in a land of shadows,
You revealed to me my completion in you.
Pondering upon the awesomeness of your beauty,
You lead me amongst the back roads and continually introduce
me to your
creation.

Laura Marker

Reflections on Love

You cleanse me with your gentle touch of fire.
You remove from me my wrong desire.
You shine on me your righteous light of laughter,
And you delight in my love for you.
But, I am busy being bored and busy trying to hurry up time—
When we both could enjoy one another's presence amongst
your creation or deep within.

I don't know how it happens.
The cares of life choke out my desire for you
 and I hunger
 and I hunger
Till it is obvious that peace is a memory and a joy a long felt
fruit.
But, then you whisper, "I will keep your mind in perfect peace if
it is
 stayed upon me."
 and,
"In my presence there is fullness of joy."
Then you bless me abundantly and speak hope and vision, and
you place
 within a desire to see that vision accomplished.
You pour out more blessing and more healing.
And then like a wanderer in the desert for forty years I remem-
ber that I
 love you and want simply to do your will and rest in
your love.
Sometimes I forget and the process begins again, hopefully with
less
 time wasted on foolishness.
But you use those foolish ways to teach me, to liberate me from
me.
 I can not fathom your great love for me.

Laura Marker

Words can be Cruel

Words often won't flow from my pen when I desire them to.
They come in the middle of lectures, conversations and observations

demanding to be written down.

When out of convenience I ignore them they leave me with a yearning.

A yearning so intense that I run searching for their hidden forms, their

hidden meanings.

I plead with them to show their identities, but they refuse to come forth.

They can be so cruel, those words, leaving me with a hunger unfulfilled.

Laura Marker

Desert Calling

Take me to the
 Badlands
Wash me
 in
this river
of dust and moonlight

It is Diana
 who
calls
from
 these
waters

underneath
 ice
of dust dunes
 and
desert dwellings,
in her
 winter
 tongue.

Mara McEwin

Painted Child

I am a color
 a Painter's child
I am a child
 of images
and the forces
 of women
 riding naked on horseback
 who pull me up to meet their
 naked skin
 and mark me
 with colors
 of vivid thoughts

Reds
 cascading from my body
 dripping
 from time to time—

Yellow,
 as they hold my head in
 sadness. Their sadness—
 because the world has abandoned
 the forces of life

Browns and Blacks
 to charcoal my daydreams
perceived only for young minds

The colors of my mother's paintbrush
 thick and oiled
 held to my child cheeks

 for comfort.

Mara McEwin

It's not enough to touch

I want to ooze,
red and yellow crayons slowly melting
on the sidewalk
carelessly left out in the sun by a child
leaving stains of maraschino cherry red
and tangy lemon yellow

I want to flow languidly,
rich tomato soup
on a cold winter day
steaming in the bowl in front of me
then sliding down my throat
warming my belly

To have my cells mix
with the cool cement cells
of my bedroom walls
with the green chloroplasts
of the plant on my window sill
with the dust particles and water molecules
of the air I breathe

with you
and your cells become my cells
and my cells become yours
kneaded together like bread dough

Rebecca Kinder

Untitled

Behind saucers of denim blue
sparks of wisdom
and elfin inspiration
a Puckish gleam,
the ethereal birthright
clouded by experience
reeling tales
inside a cocoon,
fragmented fibers of
an old soul and a youthful spirit
woven into
the translucent tapestry
veiling the soul.

Rebecca Kinder

Untitled

Safe in the oneness of the black mossy sky
they shed the clothes of the day
on the dock
naked
the thick air saturates every pore

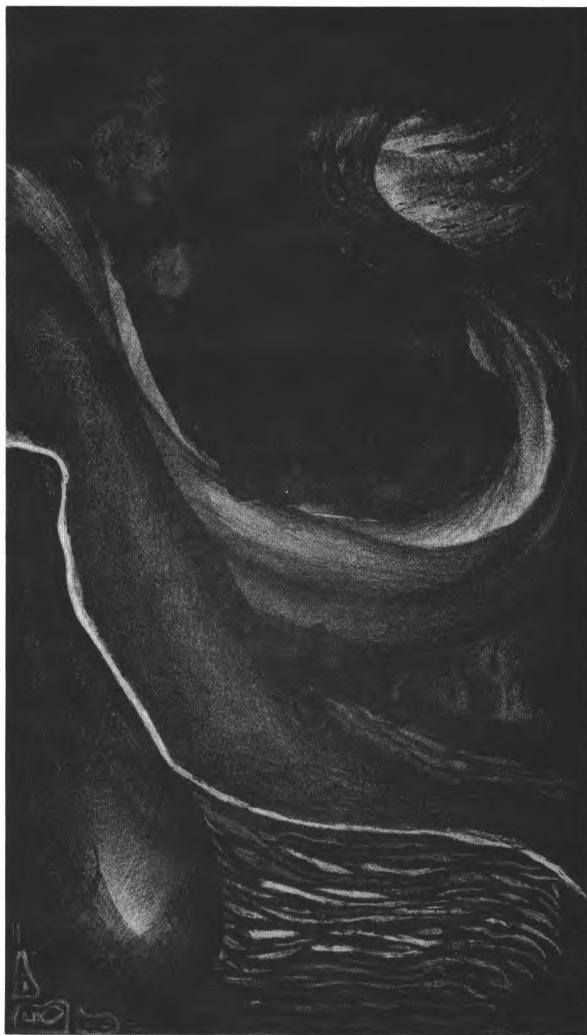
First one foot
and then the other
surrounding the feet in black ink.
Dare to plunge in all at once
"I'll jump in if you do"

savor it
slipping further and further
until their bodies are submerged
and the water clothes the naked swimmers
in cool velvet

"I'm glad I can't touch bottom"
he playfully tugs at her leg
then takes her hand
and they float out
into the thick liquid

their bodies fall away;
melting into the waxing moon
and the black inky sky
and the mossy velvet water

Rebecca Kinder



Rene Ugarte

How you got there

The natural forces in good music:
the way it can suck you in like a whirlpool;
the way it can hit your skin like cold water;
the way it can drown you;
the way it can stop suddenly, silence appearing
like a boulder in a fast-moving stream,
affording you a place to rest
and just hang on,
resume breathing and try to think
of how you got there.

Beth Rosch

You ask what it's like and it's like this

When I was very young
my older sister got sick and the doctors
didn't know what was wrong,
so they put her in the hospital for tests and tests and tests,
and I was sent to my grandmother's house
for my first vacation as an only child.

Though all the other kids on my grandmother's block
were bigger
they wanted me to play
but I stayed in my own corner of the neighborhood.

After dinner the lightening bugs came out
and all the others chased around
catching them to sell to a local chemical company,
five for a penny,
but me I loved the lightening bugs
so I left them alone
and every night stole my granfather's flashlight
out of the kitchen drawer.

By the time the streetlights hummed themselves on
the lightening bugs were all gone,
all caught or maybe all grown wise,
but my flashlight remained faithful
and I spied on worms sometimes
in the nighttime grass.

I shined my beam in the neighbor's windows
or across the railroad tracks behind the house.
Mostly, though, I aimed my flashlight at the sky,
swooping it wildly
or picking out specific stars
and wondering
if the light kept going all the way
to outer space
and wondering
if on its way
it passed through heaven.

Beth Rosch

so you understand—

You think you know what's in your head
when you begin—that is, empathy, interest,
and Shakespeare.

I know what's really there: a big red marking pen, voyeurism,
and a preconceived notion I'll never meet.

I want to say, go easy, this isn't the best I can do,
it's never the best I can do.

I want to say, please leave your yardstick of difference at the
door;

the point of this is not to measure and dissect
but to see if any parts of us match,
if there's anything I can catch and hold
that you can recognize.

I want to say, when you read my work, be gentle—
you wouldn't step on my fingers or pull my hair,
and this is no different.

To say, please don't get mired in semantics,
or go into this thinking
that I am desperate, or womanish,
or trying to be a martyr.

This isn't everything, it's not all
of what's inside my head.

What I offer to you isn't all I am, it's not my sum,
but it's the total product
of the time spent hoping you'll get home safe
and the space
between the morning's last nightmare
and the alarmclock's ring.

Beth Rosch

How Leslie explains it

Rattling down the highway in his
dirty Volkswagen, she is grateful that he likes good music,
at least, and the fact that he knows Jim Morrison's poetry
reassures her that he is probably literate,
if not intellectual.

She's never dated anyone from Oklahoma before.
Jesus, he's beautiful,
though to be perfectly honest,
she doesn't think he's bright enough to know it.
But he can talk about the stars
like he's done nothing else in his twenty-four years
but lie in the grass watching them,
and his hands are sure hands that steady her
on the railroad bridge he leads her across.
She isn't sure what's happening this September night.
She feels reckless. What could caution save? He feels
warm and solid.
He lunges to kiss her, a snake after prey,
but he's gentle when he gets there.

Maybe she can't help it, this giving in.
Maybe she's incapable of resisting long hair, brown eyes,
and a southwestern accent. Or maybe
she wants him more than she realizes.
It seems to her all entirely beyond her control,
an act unstoppable as autumn,
an episode that has nothing, really, to do with either of them.
She is just being herself,
a girl who is nice to everyone.
When he slides a hesitant hand inside her dress,
she knows she could say no, he would stop.
But she knows he wants her,
and she's a little high
and he doesn't know her phone number or address
or even her last name, so she's exempt
from repeat performances.
She complies, cooperates even,
feeling no emotion but a vague gladness
that she's good at *something*.

(From this angle she can see the moon and Orion over his left shoulder and she remembers the ex-wrestler from last night who took her home and whispered that he'd wanted to be an astronomer when he was young.)

Standing up on a gravel dead-end road,
she performs efficiently and well.
She isn't thinking of disease or pregnancy
but only of the night sky,
and how hard it always is,
trying to keep her balance.

Beth Rosch



Toni Rickman

Blossoming Violets

In the light of a pure spring day, I am becoming the essence of violet. I am splashed about in dazzling fields of fragrant flowers bustling in the wind. I crown the peaks of the most noble mountains. I am the color of royalty and the flourish of plenty.

Deep within my soul flows a rustling brook elegantly trimmed in violet flowers with dew drops on their pallid petals. I sense the warmth of life, and casting my arms around it, I capture the elegance of simplicity. Enveloped in my arms are the subtle fragrances of emotion. They never run wild like stallions. They are as calm and peaceful as the evening wind in a forest of spruce.

I am neither violent nor angry. Peace and serenity pulse through the veins of my inner being. Seizing the moment and thrusting my feeble arm into the future, I meekly walk day to day. Lingering in my senses are the vivid pictures of yesterday. The aroma of Spring's best bouquet drifts sweetly around my head.

Living is a burst of surging energy filled with imagination, spirit, and eloquence. Forgetting my sadness and swimming as the pure swan in my joy, I am becoming the essence of violet.

Tammy Lynne Williams

A Few Examples of Poison

"Sucka nigga. Niggas. Niggas."

Ooops! I think my spine just broke.

"I wanna have that nigga's baby."

Owww! I think my ear-drum popped.

"Sucka nigg..."

STOP before you break Africa's back!

Martin DID NOT risk his life everyday so that we could walk like the giraffe with steel shackles wrapped around its neck,

whip our own backs,

kill each other's children—

yes, fall apart.

"Me and that ho will knock boots!"

Ahhhh! Now you're burning my pride.

"I'd knock that bitch out first!"

Mmmm! My uterus just dissolved such as my will to introduce a new life to a world that's unprepared for them. It's just plain fucking inconvenient.

"Sucka ni..."

ENOUGH!

Ce'-sha Walters

Being a Woman

Being a woman
I have been paused
 passed
 and played
like a raped saxophone.

Being a woman
I have bitten my toenails in anticipation of some equality that
looks
more obscure everyday.

Being a woman
I have cried
 burned
 bled
and not bled

Being a woman
I have searched for buried unification among painted
complexions
only to be left in isolation.

But that's only Part One.

Being a black woman
I have been leased a vast plantation which clearly has no place
for
me. A plantation in which I must grit my teeth and
lightly sever my veins while I refer to it as the united states
of amerikkka.

Being a black woman
I have been plucked almost to death by both chocolate and
vanilla 'brothers' and 'sisters.'

Being a black woman
I have been left at the bottom of the barrel with no flashlight
and an oblique map that, if followed, would only lead me
further into the abyss.
"Why am I still here?"
Cause we've got a lot of work to do!

Ce'-sha Walters

Who's Dreaming Now

At 5:03 a.m. my eyes begin to open
They took on the room by their own will searching for Bobby
Seale,
Dick Gregory, Betty Shebazz, Nikki or Martin
Saw compact mirages colorfully scattered about my room
Wasn't good enough
Felt lost. Forgot how to spell unity
I grabbed my glasses from the narrow dresser to the left of my
bed
and placed them tightly over the appropriate fittings
I could see there was no moral revolution in the making
To buy some time, I blinked
20 years must have passed
When my eyes reopened they began to tear up from lack of
continuity
Lack of an example worthy of imitation
My mind placed the absence of human connection on my glasses
My visual aid must be lacking because Martin would not desert
us in
this state of incompleteness
this state of unpredictable fury
this state of self-destruction
At 5:25 a.m. I began to clean my glasses with the tip of my ankle-
length black cotton skirt
I began to scrub and scratch furiously like a lunatic who, like
me,
needed assistance
Once my thumb began to ache I returned them to the base of my
nose
Wasn't good enough
I saw Redd Foxx doing the nasty when he should've been
meditating
I took them off again and started over
I rubbed and rubbed until the right lens fell out
I put it to my eye still
Wasn't good enough
Why is J.J. reading porno when he should have been reading
tomorrow?
I could still see the non-progression

Don't tell me 'we've come a long way baby' when there's still so far to go
I can see the greedy mouths that invited capitalism for dinner and let it stay for breakfast
The stagnant snakes that won't tell me their secrets
The God who often promises love but somehow rapidly changes his mind
I still see the open sores on my body that force me to sit in discomfort
Tight
Aching
Ugly sores that I will die with
My DIS-EASE, the divided state of amerika
I can still see my mother crying and this is not a frequent sight
Tears of poverty Tears of exhaustion Tears for her children
Now I am angry
I grab my glasses and twist them until I hear them pop
I attempt to reassemble them on my face
They dangle like the young black man hanging in the tree that Billie
warned us about
They are useless like the gopher who does not know how to plan his
own funeral
I am squinting now
I am squinting through the jagged plastic that puts tiny scratches in
my eyeballs
Who's dreaming now?
I begin to violently thrust one of the screws into my left eye
I want it to bleed
I want it to lose its function
I want to be blind so that I can no longer witness such utterly cruel bullshit
It is now 7:32 a.m. I pick up a piece of the left lens and I scrub it
I scrub it until my fingertips are red and puffy
I continue to scrub although my eyes are bleeding so profusely that I
cannot see

We're drowning here Martin
Swimming through broken plastic particles and no promises
Remind us of the dream
That regal vision that one cannot obtain through mere visual
paraphenalia
Paraphenalia that has stunted us since your less than grand exit
Today we have visual aids such as reverend al sharpton mock-
ing
us all through due process
and I still can't see
Who's dreaming now?

Ce'-sha Walters

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