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*Cover Art
Jen Reuss

*Contest Winners

URBAN

a dead crow floats in the storm
of a midtown artery

“a victim of racial profiling”
they chirp

his silky head bobbing

up

and down

in agreement

a kamikaze wren

uptown

twitches

thirteenth floor corner office

beautiful views

thud

on a concrete parapet

a kamikaze wren

twitches

“suicide”

on a concrete parapet

“suicide”

they sing

they sing

mongrel

pigeons

and their dirty young

pick at the cracks in the broken black top--

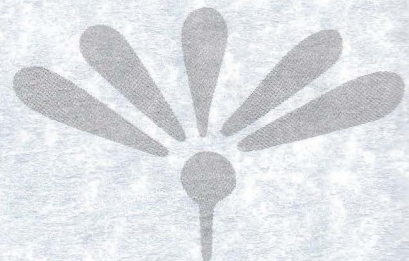
McDonalds,

6th and Bleeker--

“gotta french fry?”

“gotta french fry?”

they cry



summer's end...
central park
one weary bluebird
empty potato chip bag clasped firmly in her beak
lies still
now
they are silent
they turn their heads
and look away

URBAN BIRDWATCHING
SUSAN MARGARET SHIPOSH



ANN MARIE MILLER
"BICYCLE PARKING"

SEASON OF WISHES

I am running through the forest like a deer, fast and free. The tree branches hit my face with surprising force and I can feel the blood raise to the skin in strips along my cheeks.

This must be how the earth feels when someone is raking leaves. Another has left me. One more in a long list of those that I have trusted and those that have taken that trust and let it go with the wind. The wind flows through my hair, so uncertain and so illogical, like life. I think of how this woman may have really loved me, but she is gone. She is dead. Buses and cars don't mix well. Only one thing is certain in life-- death.

Like a bird I fly through the trees and notice only as a passing thought that my feet have left the ground. I land softly, like a leaf on the autumn floor. We were fighting all day. It was building up for months and would have ended our rela-

tionship soon enough. Still, death adds a strange sense of finality to the whole "breaking up" process. Nothing ever goes right in my life. I wished on a star last night that I would find the perfect woman, and that she would love me forever. I wished for the "soul mate" we all want and never find. Sometimes wishes come true, and this is one of those times.

I am standing straight, drawn to a sudden halt at the sheer beauty of the being in front of me. This is truly something heaven sent. A woman, more beautiful than anything I have ever seen, with flowing locks of golden hair hitting the ground like the sun's rays. White wings branch off her back and rise toward the sky, and her eyes are reminiscent of the glitter of frost on a morning lawn. She rises and stretches her wings first, then her arms and legs. She is completely naked and there are no words to describe the perfection of her body, the curves the lifelong work of some master artisan. I

feel that I need her in an infinite number of ways, and I can only say one thing, "I love you," before she rips out my heart.

Her hand, so delicate and tiny, with porcelain skin and flawless glass nails reaches into my chest with little difficulty and plucks the beating organ out like a pea from its pod. She drops it on the ground and I lose thought of it as I am consumed with a sexual desire so strong that I grab this angel, this embodiment of perfection, and cram her close to me. She presses against my chest, my hollow chest that spills blood down her ivory body, like a dying deer spilling its life into the fresh snowfall. Reaching into my head this time, she removes my brain, pulling my eyes along with it out of my head.

My body falls to the ground, a fleshy mess, and she holds my brain in her hand as I devour her with my thoughts of how wondrous my life will be with her. She is perfect, immortal, she cannot leave me, I will be happy with her for my

entire life. I need her. I cannot exist anymore without her. The jelly matter of my brain clings to her hand with desperation. She drops my brain matter to the ground, eyes included, yet I feel as if I am still in front of her, still conscious of her presence and her beauty. I feel light as air, and with this thought, I begin to float.

She spreads her wings and holds me close to her body as we lift toward the sun. We swirl through the morning air and are transformed into one. Then we merge with others and still more and become a larger whole, until the whole is too large to comprehend. I glance downward, one final glance, and notice only the battered remains of a boy, several hundred feet below a cliff, with his body dashed on the rocks. Some wishes come true, and some do not, and death is certain, but only as certain as life.

SEASON OF WISHES
MATTHEW KOCH

KEROSENE AND ROSES

To love you is to be on fire
And to burn with great distress
For you return no heat towards my desire
Because my emotions won't come undressed

I send roses to knock at your doorway
But only kerosene lay at your feet
My words, if at all, come too late
And the petals turn to the puddle you see

And yet I swoon and my thoughts swarm
My soul tangled in thoughts of you
The sparks I feel keep my hope warm
But your not knowing keeps my heart blue

I long to tell you of fragrant roses
But they only appear in my dreams
And until I can find a way to show you
All that will be is sweet smelling kerosene

"KEROSENE AND ROSES"
HELENE CAPRARI

THE MOMENT

During my moment, don't bow your head.

That is not my request.

Instead raise your chin, look to the sky,
And remember all of the best.

During my moment, don't shed a tear

For my time has already passed.

So keep the memories fresh in your head
And make damn sure they last.

During my moment put your hand on the shoulder

Of whoever should stand near.

Forgive transgressions and celebrate life
For in death, I was without fear.

During my moment, you'll see my face.

You may even think you understand.

But the truth is that nobody does
For in death, alone you must stand.

"THE MOMENT"

SCOTT HUNTER

When in leaving, if you should
turn,
If you should watch - the fires
burn,
If you are tricked and turn, in
leaving,
If you are lured by Satan's spell,

Teasing your heart,
Tearing your heart,
Twisting your heart
in leaving.

No beloved eyes will seek you.
No applause or dazzling arms will
hold you.
No warm words will calm your
soul.
No escape (if you should turn),

To younger days of unlettered
bliss,
Rising to the sun, falling to the
moon,
The lifeline, oxygen, the simple
gifts,
Unguarded flaunted happiness.

When in leaving, if you should
turn,
Trees fat and full and green,
Hiding winter walls,
Walls of weeded brick, windows
cracked,
Pavement crisscrossed with tall
grasses.

Darkened halls, voices of long ago,

A million days in motion slow,
Slow the speed - stretch a smile,
Across the screen a mother's face
Unfocused, fuzzy on the silent
reel.

Long summer skirt swirls about
the midway.
How could you know,
in leaving?
A turn to see
behind, below,
A turn to see,
in leaving.

Long evening shadows fill the
yard,
Quiet chirp, soft boughs of hem-
lock,
Strains of running water sigh
overhead,
Brother perfectly preens
Behind the second floor bath-
room screen.
Then given a wink,
in leaving.

Evening will recount the days,
Recall the days from memory.
what better time to turn
When dark green and white gold
Melt and burn,
Engrave the days
in leaving.

Should you turn, should you pry,
Should you pitch your hurried
flight,

Mouth ajar and squinting eyes,
Oh, to be the crazy mind,
The lunatic for all of time,
Relatives and friends alike,
Line the streets and all surprised,
Line your brain the rest of your
life,
A saucy squeal, in leaving,
Praising you,
in leaving,
Haunting you,
in leaving.

When in leaving, if you should
turn,
If you should roam the shoreline
home,
Jagged gulls fumbling the sand,
Crying claps on reckless rocks,
Voices muffled in wistful waves,
Break your heart
in leaving.

Awake to the crash of your own
Your own headlights
Your own replayed life
too late to turn
to swerve
to beat a path
in leaving.

If you should smell the pages
burn,
If you should feel the words erupt,
and slice
and smirk
and steal
and strut

and float
and flit
and fume
and fall
and line the wall -
your foolish head.
your foolish, bungling, puzzling
head,
your turn
to walk
to shift
to shake
your turn
to take
in leaving.

When in leaving, if you should
turn,
If you should spot the quiet eye,
If you recall the gentle hand,
The calming sound that rocked
your life,
Your lullaby in foreign lands,
Your lullaby
in leaving.

MARY SCHIEB

"IF YOU SHOULD TURN"

The rain fell vengefully against the weathered cabin. Everything except the rain was silent. She could hear the sound of her own breathing as she read a book by Collins. Night had fallen about two hours ago just as the rain began to roll and still there was no sign of her husband. He had gone out hunting just after dinner with Dutch. Again she looked at the old tic-toc clock, 9:30 PM. Moving out of her cozy rocking chair Bill had made her three Christmases ago, she went to the battered window and peered out into the rain. Darkness, a type of dark that could nearly blind a person if one would look into it long enough. Suddenly a crash of lightning followed by thunder split the darkness. She jumped in alarm not from the lightening flash or thunder, but from the realization that a figure was standing just up the hill. Something inside her, call it women's intuition, told her that it wasn't Bill or anyone she knew before. A brief moment of panic and paranoid speculations rushed through her mind of who this stranger could be. A burglar? A murderer? A rapist?

Quickly she pushed herself from the window and double-checked that all the doors and windows had been locked. Everything was safe at least from the inside.

A loud knock on the door interrupted her thoughts followed by several harsh thumps. It sounded as if the person was kicking the door. For a moment she feared the door might actually splinter from the force.

"What is it you want!" she yelled loudly from behind the door.

"I've had an accident up the road! I need to use your phone!" the voice was deep and urgent.

A moment of thought rushed through her mind and the humanitarian inside her opened the door. The figure was large, massive in height, and drenched with rain.

"Come inside. I'll get the phone," she gulped already regretting her action.

"If you don't mind ma'am, I'll stand out her on the porch. I wouldn't want to ruin your lovely rugs with e soaking and all." he replied now calm.

"All right. I'll be right back." Within a few seconds she returned with the cordless. She noticed that the man was halfway over the door now ogling the inside of her home.

"Her you are, sir."

"Thanks," he nodded as he took the phone and deliberately brushed his large thumb across the scale of her knuckles. The sensation sent a chill through her body. She wasn't sure if it was alarm or shock she felt. She met his eyes and the cold blue pierced her vision.

"Yes, is this Frank's Motor Haul?" he spoke over the phone in a quick, abrupt manner. "Yes, I've had an accident and I'm going to need my car toed. What was that? No, I've hydroplaned right into a ditch. Yes, that's right. I'm on Lockleed Road. About two miles from the Carlton exit. One hour! Find, I'll be waiting. Thank you."

She listened to his voice hearing the tone of annoyance flutter into the conversation. There was something strangely disturbing about this man, she decided.

"Thank you for the phone, ma'am. It appears that I'll have an hour's wait for the tow truck. I'd be very grateful if you'd put me up for that hour. I'd hate to go back out into that rain so soon."

"I'm not so sure. I don't know what my husband would think when he comes home to see me with a strange man."

"Don't worry. I'll be gone before he'll even get back, I'm sure of it."

She gave him a doubtful look and in that moment of hesitation, he took the time to step across the threshold of the cabin.

"Nice place you've got," he spoke ignoring the look of horror on her face.

The stranger found a seat in her favorite rocking chair and pulled out a cheroot. He looked ridiculous sitting in that chair with his knees bent awkwardly trying to fit comfortably in such a small seat for his girth. She watched him in astonishment as the man quickly took over her home.

"Got a match?"

"We don't smoke in my home. If you'd notice, it's all made of logs. Bill says it's a fire hazard so we both quit smoking once we moved here."

"Who's Bill?"

"My husband. He'll be coming home soon."

"Yes, that's right. I remember." he nodded casually as he tucked the cheroot back into his coat.

"So, I overheard you hydroplaned with your car?"

"Good ears. That's exactly what happened. I didn't even see it coming. My car looks like a damn wreck. The entire front of it is dipped into the ditch."

"Strange things a little rain can do," she shrugged ignoring his tone of malice.

"Yeah, strange."

She looked at the tic-tock clock again, 10:00 PM. Where were Bill and Dutch?

"So you have a pet?" he asked pointing to the dog bed cornered next to the fireplace.

"Yes, his name is Dutch. He's a great dog. Loves to hunt with my husband who should be back any minute. I don't know what's been keeping him."

"I've already told you not to worry. He'll be back later," he spoke now with impatience.

She shook her head as she studied the stranger with a degree of disbelief. He was sweating and it wasn't because of the rain.

"What are you so nervous about?" she asked with a careless wonder.

"Nervous? What are you talking about?" he chuckled lightly.

"You just seem to be sort of on edge."

"What makes you say that?"

"Nothing. It's probably just your nerves from the accident you've had."

"Really, what made you think that? Why do you think I'm nervous about something?" he questioned with anger rising in his voice.

"It was just that you were sweating. I took it as you being nervous about something."

"You're one clever lady, aren't you? trying to get me to crack, huh?"

"What are you talking about?"

"You know what really happened don't you?"

"Sir, you're making no sense," and at that moment something clicked inside her. "What happened out there tonight? What kind of accident did you really have?" she asked dreading that he was holding a terrible secret. Perhaps it was that secret that had her feeling uneasy about him all this time.

"You know what really happened don't you? That's why you keep throwing your husband and that damn dog back into my face!" he screamed with a maddening smile.

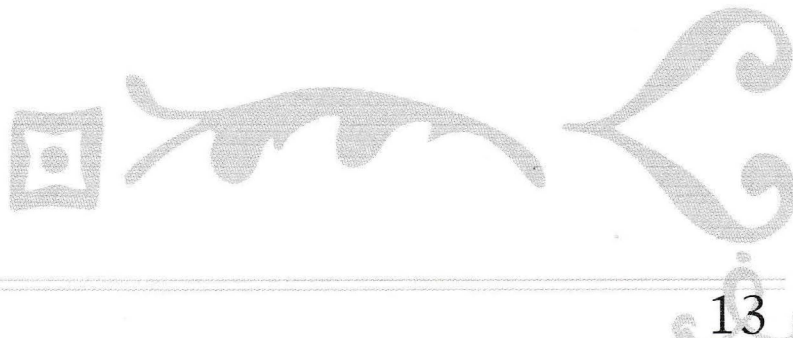
"What?!" she held her breath in shock.

"You know what happened," he repeated again and laughed wildly. "That's why I came here, you know. I saw the address on his driver's license. I'm a hunter too."

"A hunter? Just what is it you hunt, sir?" she gulped with building apprehension.

The man gave a sinister smile displaying his angular teeth. "The last thing I hunted was a man and his dog," he coolly replied as he lit the cheroot that he pulled from his glinting coat.

"THE HUNTER" *The Hunter*
JENNIFER REUSS



FELLAHEEN

JESUS

Charlie Parker's whaling,
wail,
wailing
woo-hoo
makes me wanna'
drop
trop
rop
ta' my knees
in self-deprecating depreciation
supplication
justa' meager supplicant before bloodied
experience exploded minda' Christ
when he came back from treckin'
Treckin' all over the Himalayas
'cause ya know he did. He did.
He did it
disappeared from thirty years
of the Alcatraz tight bible
that those early church father's
didn't wancha' ta' know about
Didn't wancha' ta' know Jesus
Jesus was such a fellaheen guy.
I'm just another
Another in a enden snacking long line of
supplicants
to the sacred river of the word horn
whose bellowing's

foretell the peyote visions
visions of a something and goodness
flying to the corner of that table
seeing sight sounds of the Chicago
where my father lived in a YMCA in
wartime Chicago
smoked pot before hippies where
a twinkle ruptured pain in
heart of any Vietnam vet
coming back bloodied with sense
of distorted,
diabolical
accomplishment
'cause the media made us lose
that war
I cried a million tears when
I saw the dead body
of
some
 one
some
 idea
some
 thing
about it all
struck me like Parker's
wailing
whale
wailing
of a tune.
Blasted note call hoary call.

"FELLAHEEN JESUS"
ANONYMOUS

It was the first day of school, in 5th period. There, in the front seat of the second row, sat upright a delicately groomed mountain goat, in a Gap sweater with untattered blue jeans.

"Are you sure you're in the right classroom?" Miss Jones inquired. Indeed it was, as even her role book confirmed its presence. She stared down blankly at the four letters G-O-A-T inscribed in the blue pages, and listened to the rest of the class fail miserably to control its maddening snickering and shock.

"That's it. Off with the costume."

Singled out in such a mean derogatory manner, the goat stammered and snarled, unveiling a massive set of yellow teeth and a pair of gums as brown as a hammer.

"Is this some kind of sick joke?" Jones accused.

"Is what some kind of sick joke?"

The teacher gasped and the goat captured her gaze closely and directly. It stared her down with a primal ferocity.

"Nothing, um..." she shuddered, scrambling for words, "No, nothing."

The goat seemed pleased.

Miss Jones rubbed her temples, "Let us now proceed with class as usual."

"Baaah!" Goat teased her.

Miss Jones just carried on with class as best as she possibly could, telling herself that the goat was "just another student," and "nothing to be

afraid of." She caught herself glancing at the uncanny creature intermittently, but managed to appear unfazed by its presence by pretending she was looking for the clock.

"Cheating will not be tolerated in this classroom, nor will foul language. There will be two tests each quarter. Later on in the year, we will be reading Lord of the Flies, L'Engel's A Wrinkle In Time, and Orwell's," she bit her lip and lowered her voice, "Animal Farm."

An awkward seven seconds passed without objection from the goat. The bell rang and class was dismissed.

"Don't forget to read page 1!" Miss Jones hollered at the fleeting students. When the last bunch had left, she crept furtively into her backroom office, turned on the fan, scrambled for her cigarettes, and lit up a Misty.

"Unbelievable," she rolled her eyes in recollection. She tweaked her 80's style brunette curls until they made her look "dignified" and "business-oriented."

The next day in class felt marginally more placid for everyone. Miss Jones lectured on the values of good reading skills, and answered questions about current events in America and South Africa. Her stiff blouse seemed a hair's-breadth too tight, but no one seemed to notice. Halfway through class, the

goat raised his hoof.

"Yes, Goat? Oh!" she adjusted the blinds to bring more sun into the room, "May I...May I call you Goat?"

"That would be fine."

"Well then, Goat, what would you like to know today?"

Goat rasped out a noise sounding vaguely like a hybrid of a cough and a battle cry.

"Goat?"

"Nice purse."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Your purse," as yesterday, the goat leered at the teacher with those beady eyes, "Where did you get it? It's lovely."

Miss Jones stared down at her violet high heels. She shifted uncomfortably, "It's vinyl."

"It is not."

"Then it's leather."

"No," the goat raised its face high with the arrogant visage of an ancient Roman intellectual, "Will you kindly tell the class what that purse is really made of?"

"Well..." she sipped her coffee nervously, "It's goatskin."

"Tragic!" cried a sensitive college-bound girl in the fourth row.

"Yes, tragic. My sincerest apologies," Miss Jones said to Goat.

"Shove it."

The rest of the period was dedicated to silent reading, and Miss Jones retreated to her desk, where she breezed through the latest Cosmo until the bell rang.

During her lunch hour, she

called the principal's office.

"Lily, it's so fucking bizarre. I have no idea what to say to the damn thing!"

"Calm down, calm down. Now just be nice to the goat, and remember to be as professional as possible."

"Yes, nice and professional to him. I will. Okay."

"Miss Jones."

"Yes?"

"It's a she."

"Oh my!" Miss Jones almost choked on her slender cigarette.

"Yes, now remember--be as nice to her as possible. Don't disappoint me. Goodbye." Over the next few months, the goat got away with murder in that classroom. It was never on time, and would frequently leave class, at will, regardless of the circumstances--tests, discussions, anything; if the goat didn't feel like being there, it simply stormed out. On January 24th, the entire class was dismissed prematurely because the goat was stomping her hooves so thunderously and incessantly that the teachers on the floor beneath her thought they were having an earthquake. Goat was gently reprimanded for her "mild disturbance" and "outrageous behavior." But despite all the brazenness and tomfoolery, she was still getting an A+.

"High quality work," Miss Jones commented on her first two report cards.

Socially, however, Goat was a disaster. At lunch, she feasted on dishes of straw and hay, prepared specially by the cafeteria staff, and sat alone. She could never have friends over and her classmates would tease and harass her. "Teacher's Pet," they used to say when they thought she wasn't around. To combat this, Goat rode the latest trend and began painting her hooves purple and bleaching her fur, until a certain Missy Cantrel told her to "give it up," cause "ya aint got shit."

"Who asked you?"

"No one needs to ask nothing," Missy copped a beefy attitude, "Everyone knows you belong in a petting zoo, or better yet..." she slowed to dramatize the killing blow, "on a farm."

"I'll tear out your last ligament," Goat snorted, "Let's take this outside."

"Fight? Hell no. I know better than to go taming some sorta wild animal like you."

Goat lunged for Missy's forearm and seized her wrist with her hard, yellow teeth. She gnawed on it ruthlessly for a few seconds before a nearby gym teacher arrived and split them up. As penalty, Goat was admonished in the principal's office for her vile attack, and given a warning, while Missy was suspended for a whole week for her degrading remarks.

"We cannot have that kind of language in our school sys-

tem," the principal told Missy's parents.

And soon it was March 20th. On March 20th, school was in a half-day session in honor of parent-teacher conferences. Several parents found it "just a tad bit unusual" to see a middle-aged ram and his lovely wife ambling through the halls and into the English classroom. But Miss Jones greeted them with glee and cordiality.

"I'm Raquel Jones. It's a great pleasure to meet both of you," she clasped her hands. The couple said nothing.

"So you're from the mountains I hear? Great scenery out there, right?" She smiled like she had just seen the sun for the first time. The effect was shiny, but nonetheless insincere.

"Can I offer you some hay? I had it imported all the way from Kittenkill, Nebraska; it's supposed to be of the highest quality. Would you like some?"

Both goats tilted their horns downward, in decline.

So Jones continued babbling, "Oh yes, and Goat! Why that's just what we're here to talk about isn't it?" she laughed nervously, "Goat is quite the excellent student--what outstanding study habits that kid has!"

At this, Mr. Goat raised his furry brow.

"Oops, did I say 'kid'? My, how careless of me," Jones scratched her neck, "I'm just not used to this. I apologize."

"Unacceptable," spoke Mr.

Goat for the first time, “Unforgivably obnoxious and how callously discriminatory.” He stood up on all fours, “Goodday, Miss Jones.”

Jones tried to explain herself but they refused to entertain any further thoughts.

The father whispered something to his wife that they caused her to laugh derisively at the English instructor and they snorted at her in unison. They stamped out of the building.

The next day in school, Miss Jones saw Goat trotting to class and stopped her for a moment. “Oh honey, I met your parents yesterday afternoon and what can I say? They’re marvelous! And they were both so very polite to me. I was definitely impressed.”

Goat churned a curious puzzled facial expression, but marched on without even acknowledging Miss Jones.

Jones returned to her private office and phoned the school principal.

“Lily, you were right,” she momentarily muffed the receiver so the sound of her cigarette lighting up would be inaudible, “Everything is working out just so pristinely.”

“Good. See? What did I tell you.”

“You were right.”

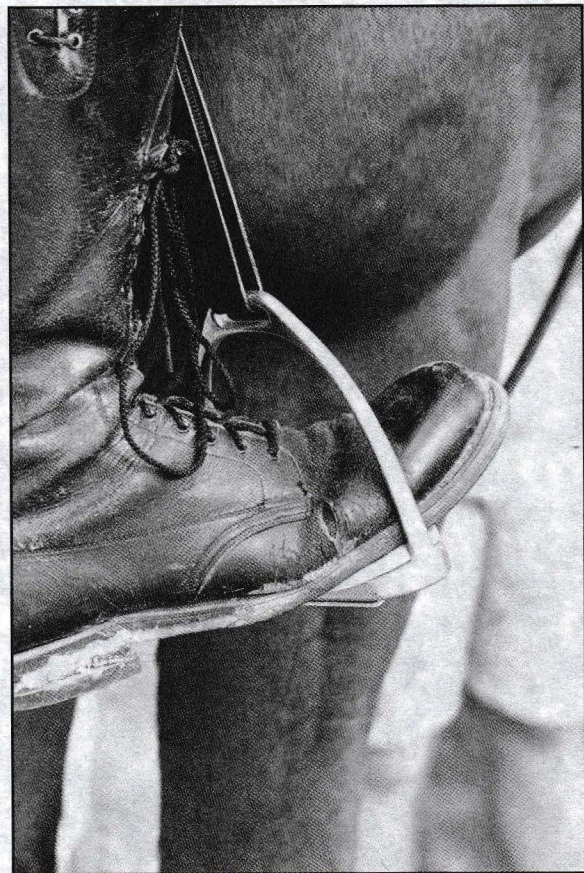
“As always. Talk to you later.”

Miss Jones recalled the conversation (or lack thereof) she’d had with the Goat’s parents and smiled, as she absorbed her Misty. She caught sight of the nearby office mirror and nodded at her reflection, “I just have to stay nice and professional about the whole thing.”

BRIAN P. KELLY
“GOAT”

GOAT
CHURNED
A CURIOUS
PUZZLED
FACIAL
EXPRESSION

ADAM POLINGER
“UNTITLED”



It has been two weeks since the awful terrorist attack that struck the lives of so many Americans affecting not only a few; but the entire country. Since this infamous day in New York the nation had proudly displayed their support, patriotism is expressed in every window of every home I drive past. People are donating whatever they can to help the victims and heroes in New York, donating money, blood, food, water, anything they can to get this country through this most trying time. Anything that can be done to assure the American people can hold their heads high once again and remember what the sense of security felt like. I hear speeches and patriotic songs on the radio, boosting the moral of fellow United States citizens and I think how amazing it is that our country has come together. However, I also think about how many people actually took the time out of their hectic schedules and focused on the people in their own lives. That for the most part our order of importance alters as we get caught up with our 'busy' schedules allowing what truly matters to dwindle, think and taking for granted that our loved ones will always be there, and when you think about it, the New Yorker's who were affected September 11th thought the same thing. But how many people involved in the tragedy are regretting that their parting words were spoken in rushed terms because they needed to leave the house as quickly as possible to get to work on time, if not ten minutes early, possibly to catch a bus, or drop their children off at day care. How much those people would have valued that extra five minutes with their loved ones rather than speeding out the door saying "see ya later!" But why is it that human nature is to take life into perspective only during times of tragedy, or when we lose a loved one? And isn't it capturing to know that it was those individuals that took their time in the morning, choosing to lie in bed an extra five minutes with the one they loved, it was those certain individuals who decided to spend their morning with their children on their first day of kindergarten rather than bustling out the door to get to work, it was those who chose the finer gifts in life who actually survived this tragedy because they just-so-happened to be late. It is unfortunate that it takes an experience such as September 11th that allows you to appreciate the loved one's surrounding you and how valuable those extra five minutes can be, instead of running out the door, taking a few minutes to embrace the one you love a little longer, to say "I love you", or make a point to express affection to the one you love before you leave them. Young and old alike, one can never tell what is in store for us tomorrow.

MARIA RALLO

"A SAD SEPTEMBER 11TH"



JEN RUESS
"LIGHTHOUSE"



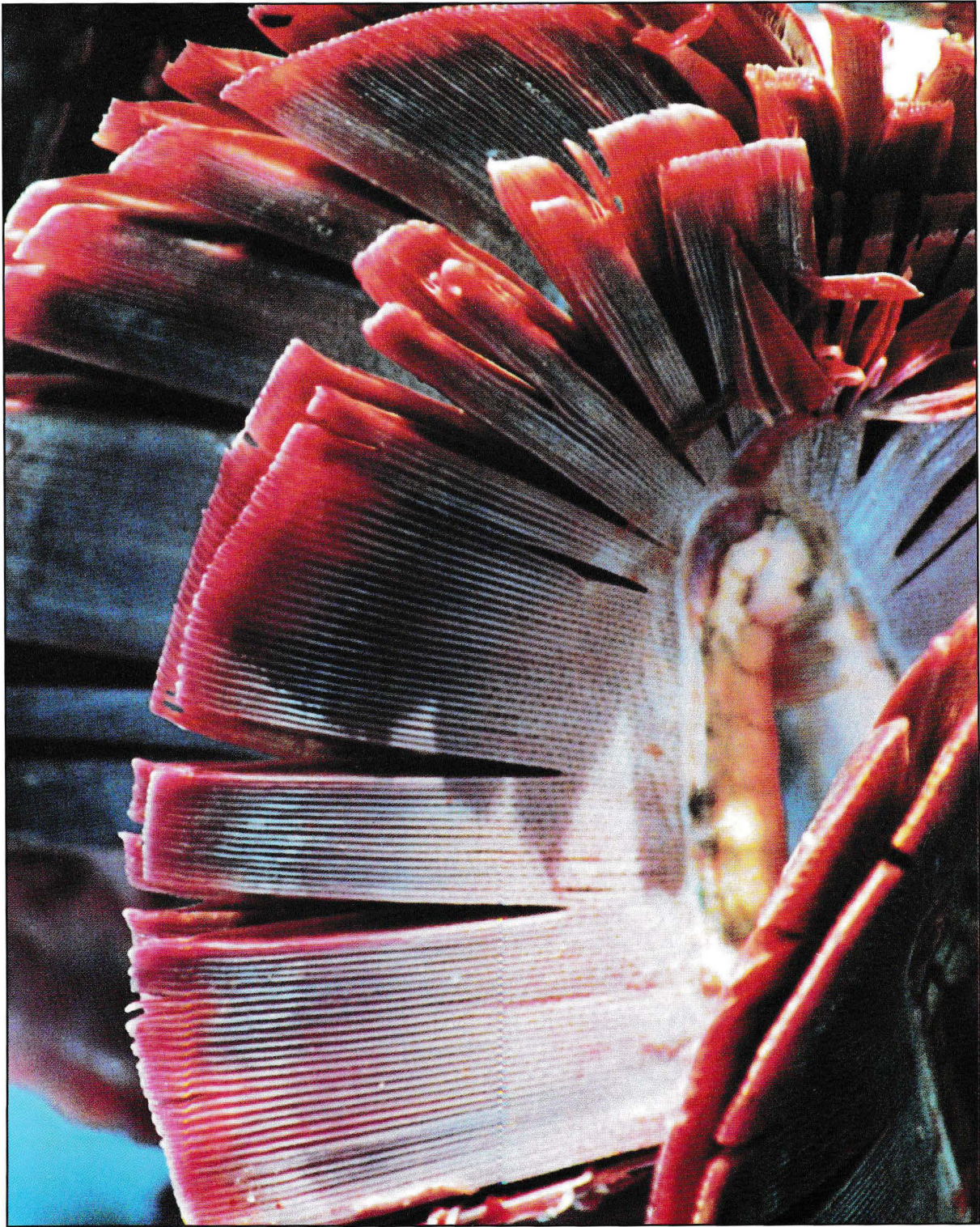
TERRY L. ZIPAY
"BOCCI BALLS"



JEN TALLMAN
"ROUND & ROUND"



JEN TALLMAN
"POLLENATION"



JEN TALLMAN
"TUNA GILL"



JEN REUSS
"UNTITLED"

“The Karma one throws out will come back to them.”

“The U.S. has been taken advantage of for too long. We need to defend ourselves. REMEMBER: the shoemaker’s children go barefoot.”

“Let ‘God’ have mercy, I don’t.”

“I don’t know how World War 3 will be fought but I know World War 4 will be fought with sticks and stones.”

How will this affect my children?

“We must choose carefully how we handle this situation because after our retaliation they will have some counter-attack that could kill more innocent Americans.”

CAPITALIST SLUT

Kurt was still trying to convince Justin that the Beatles were no better than the Doors just because they sold more records when his attractive muscular friend turned his attention to a girl with bottle-blond hair. She appeared to be too young to drive and was wearing a small white shirt that exposed her navel and blue shorts that barely covered her but. Oblivious to his friend's new admirer, Kurt stopped talking and continued walking down the promenade. Seconds later, laughing and breathing heavily, Justin clutched the shoulder of his friend, catching his gangly hair between his fingers.

The girl Justin had just talked to returned to her friends, and the girls laughed in the background. A chunky girl in a short black skirt asked Justin's new admirer what Joey would think of the situation. She retorted that she didn't care because Joey wasn't nearly as hot.

"There's something wrong with girls today," stated Kurt, seemingly unimpressed with his friend's ability to attract younger girls.

"Don't be jealous because the girls don't flock to you," countered Justin, handing a slip of paper to Kurt. "Besides, you can have her if you want her, here's her number. I'm not going to call her."

From immediately behind them, a gasp was drawn in and the two turned to see tears well in the eyes of Justin's admirer (Jessica according to the slip of paper which Kurt was now holding) who was sneaking up to tell him something. The girl turned and ran back to the four scantily clad girls she was with, two of whom were talking to each other on their cell phones.

"That's quite an ass she has on her," remarked an unfazed Justin.

Kurt was clearly bothered by his friend's act. "She's fifteen years old man, give it a rest. Her daddy would lock you up in jail so quickly if you tried anything with her."

"Yeah, well she looks a lot older than fifteen, and even if she is fifteen, I'd still like to rail her," returned Justin. "Don't tell me you don't think she looks hot!"

"It doesn't matter what I think of her. It's just wrong that girls act the way they do these days."

"I know," said Justin, "but I like it. If I ever have a daughter though, I'm not letting her look or act like most of the girls that I know do. There must be some bad new influence out there these days, because girls never acted like this when we were in high school. I really wish they would have."

"I think I know what the biggest and worse influence is on young girls these days," said Kurt in a most authoritative voice.

"What's that?" questioned Justin.

"Well, her name starts with a 'B' and rhymes with easy. Her body's

fake and she can't sing. Her head is filled with air and she dresses like a slut."

"Oh come on, Britney's tits are really, and is she was so stupid, then why is she so rich? Who cares if she can't sing, all her songs are on MTV, just press mute and watch her in those skimpy outfits. Enjoy the show!"

"Justin," said Kurt in a calm voice, "I'm talking about Barbie."

"Well I'm glad, I wouldn't want you talking about my girlfriend in that way. But what's Barbie got to do with teenage girls dressing like whores?"

"Let me explain," suggested Kurt as the two took on a wooden bench. "Have you seen some of the outfits on Barbie lately? They are totally inappropriate for young girls to see; I'm talking about short shorts and skirts, belly shirts that show a lot cleavage, fishnet pantyhoses, knee-high boots; I could go on and on."

"Actually, Kurt," I don't go to the toy section much anymore, let alone the Barbie section, so I haven't taken notice. What the hell are you doing there anyway," inquired Justin.

"My little niece Kim wanted a Barbie doll for Christmas, but after seeing some of those dolls, I decided to get her Monopoly. Anyway, Britney Spears's attire is probably more appropriate than what Barbie wears."

"So what's your point? Girls are going to idolize Britney anyway and dress just like her. They'll still look like sluts."

"True, but there's more. Did you ever notice that Barbie is the "perfect" female figure: blonde hair, blue eyes, long legs, skinny midsection, perky tits, and acne-free skin?"

"I don't play with Barbie dolls, but I think that's a fair assessment."

"And did you notice that Ken, her man, is a very handsome, clean-cut guy with a toned body and perfect attire?"

"Yeah, so what's your point?"

"My point is that every girl wants to have a perfect figure so they can get with the perfect guy. When a young girl gets a zit, starts putting on a few pounds, or doesn't grow big tits, she gets upset. Why? Because she fears she won't be able to get the perfect guy."

A woman showing the first signs of gray hair and reeking of perfume, walked by and rolled her eyes just as Kurt looked up, drawing a reserved laugh from Justin. "Go on," he said, "this is amusing. I want to hear the rest of it."

Kurt resumed, "Girls are always complaining that they're fat, that they're ugly, that their acne won't go away, that they're too short, and that their boobs aren't big enough. This is because they are not with the guy of their dreams. Even when girls have boyfriends, they still complain about these problems, because the guy they are with isn't the perfect one, like Ken."

"No girl has ever complained about herself when she was with me, so I must be Ken, the perfect guy that every girl seeks," boasted Justin, mockingly.

"Well some of us guys have had to deal with it, and it isn't pleasant," replied Kurt. The point is that girls have low self-esteem because they feel they look as perfect as Barbie, and therefore, can't get the perfect boyfriend, like Ken. Even married women yearn for the perfect guy. My sister is always lusting over Ricky Martin, to the point of angering my brother-in-law. If she ever had a chance with him, there's no telling what she'd do. No wonder everyone tells you not to marry and their marriage is so unhappy."

"And what if a girl is luck enough to get with the guy she thinks is perfect?" pondered Justin aloud.

"She'll find out that his looks are all he has," responded Kurt. "Barbie's man is all looks, so that's what young girls see as the only desirable treat for men. When a woman winds up with a man that has looks and no brains, things eventually will get messy."

Nick prodded further, "What's a girl to do then?"

"In an ideal world, girls wouldn't base everything on looks, and instead would go for a man who has a brain and is compatible with her," explained Kurt. "Instead, girls just want someone who looks good and who can buy them scores of material junk like expensive outfits, stylish cars like the Volkswagen Bug, and cell phones so she can talk to all her friends. Sound like teenage girls to you?"

Justin nodded.

"These girls all have material desires and nothing else. They don't seek anything that is fulfilling intellectually or spiritually."

"Explain to me one thing Kurt," requested Justin. "How come girls have only started dressing like suck skanks since Britney came along?"

"Who influenced Britney to dress the way she does? One can easily blame Madonna, who was likely inspired by Marilyn Monroe, but who influenced her? The answer is Barbie. She's been around forever and she's always adjusting her attire and accessories to match all the different people in our society to make herself more marketable, as our capitalist society demands of products. Somewhere along the line, she got a little racy and the girls that played with that particular doll followed her lead. Things just got snowballed from there. She became a victim of Mattel's lust for profit."

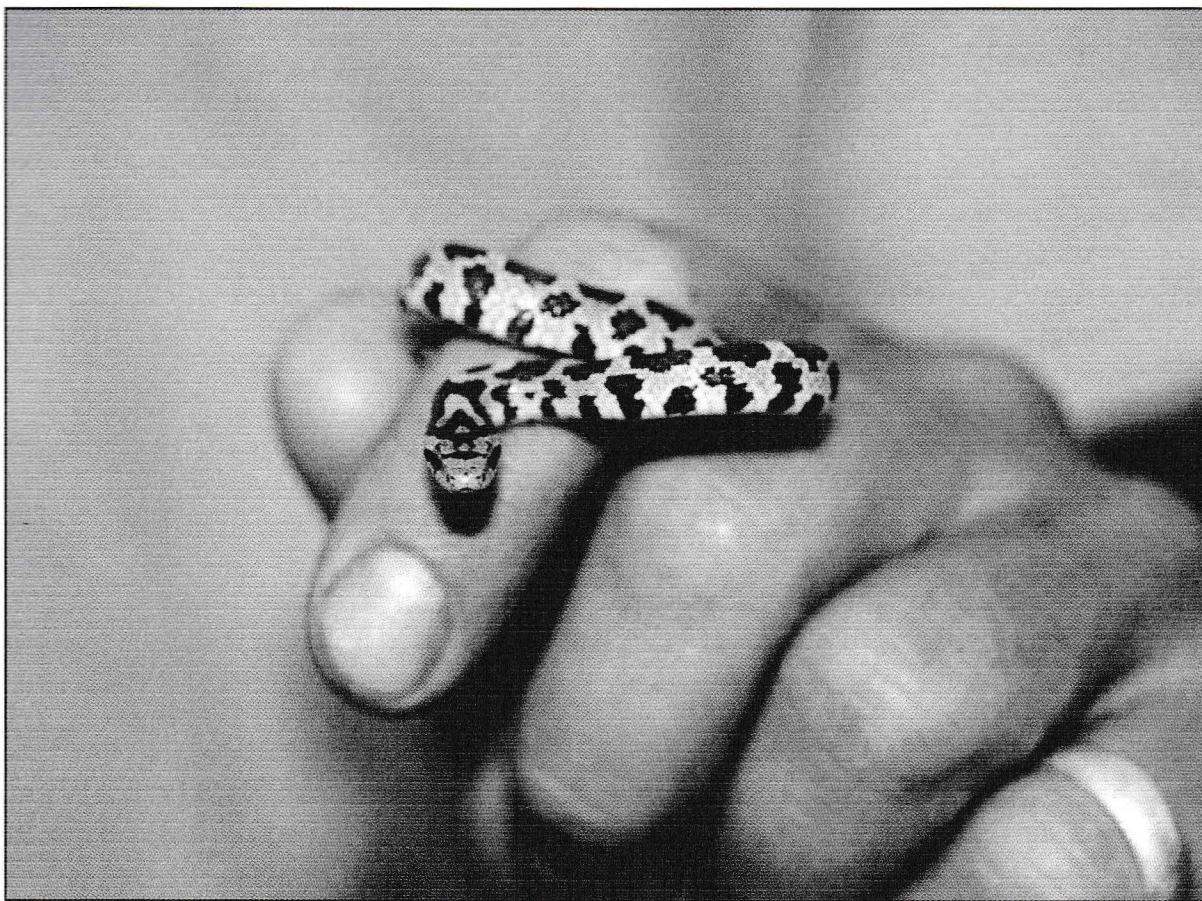
"Dude, you're out there," stated Justin, shaking his head.

Kurt wasn't done. "Everyone wants to blame Britney because she's an obvious target. She's got money, success, and popularity, so it's easy to be jealous of her and to hate her. Barbie, on the other hand, provides a front for Mattel. You can't see the executives who are influencing your daughters in such a bad way, so it's much harder to blame them. Besides, no one wants to blame a little plastic doll that keeps their daughters out of their hair, but really she's just a capitalist slut."

Justin, after a lengthy silence said, "That was way, way too intellectual for me, but I think you might be onto something. It's really amazing how anything can be shown to have a bad influence on us."

"There's no utopias out there Justin," stated Kurt. "For every good there's a bad and for every bad there's a good. It's up to us to make sure we pull out the good and leave the bad behind."

PETE SCHMIDT
"THE CAPITALIST SLUT"



JEN TALLMAN
"SNAKE EYES"

28 BARS AND A LOCK

They put me in this cell unjustly, man. How does a man of my stature get sent to jail? I wrote "Bottle up your Rage so You'll Only Have to let it out Once", for Christ's sake. It was a best seller! Well, it was a best seller in Canada anyway. You know, it was a damn Canadian that got me thrown in here.

I was at my weekly poker gathering with some local Mob underling friends of mine. These were the kinds of guys that couldn't shit without being told to. It was Vinny "The Lips" Ganzettie, Johnny "Four Toes" Luchettie, and Lou "Please give me my money before I become agitated and curse you out" Angelo. Lou was quite the ineffective Mafia chump as you should be able to tell by his clever naming.

Lou brought a friend of his to the game. Some damn French Canadian that was more annoying than Oprah pretending that she's a good person. This is the kind of guy that you'd love to kick in the throat until his trachea collapsed. Well, this croissant-loving deusche bag decided that he wanted to win just about every hand for the duration of the night, which would have been fine with me if I didn't owe that black-mailing photographer a few grand for the pics he got of me with the Olsen twins, but I digress.

As the night was winding down, this fancy prick decides that he knows a little something "about" Hockey. Mr. Quebec felt the need to inform us that Wayne Gretzky was the best hockey player ever. Being the only other person in the room that gave a damn, I threw up great opposition: "That prancing little wuss didn't even know what a hit was. Gordie Howe played for five damn decades and was still creaming guys half his age when hi was fifty".

The Canadian responded, "Gordie Howe is a no talent hack that disgraces the game of hockey."

Right about there is when I lost it. Alarms began going off in my head like it was the fourth of July. All kinds of rage channeled into my foot as I kicked his throat until his trachea collapsed. He didn't die or anything, but I think I made him see my side of the argument a little better.

Needless to say, I got thrown behind twenty -eight bars and a lock and Frenchie got sponge baths for a week or so. It's not so bad in here though. The meals are hot and the beds are soft. I miss playing poker and the Olsen twins, but I guess we can't always get what we want. I've even gotten the chance to start my next book. I'm calling it "How to Effectively Release our Rage Without Crushing some Asshole's Trachea". This time, I'm not even releasing it in Canada.

SCOTT HUNTER

"28 BARS AND A LOCK"

A RENDEZVOUS FOR TWO

Sweet caress and tender kiss
Left two strangers in a passionate
twilight
the moon and stars reveal the true beauty
of this romantic night
The fire works in this lovely sky reveal the passion in our eyes
the heartbeating that we possess
reveal the true affection within our hearts

As we make love on this unforgettable night
while our body embrace as one
let's make a wish upon our soul
that we shall always be together
as lovers
and may god allow many more nights like
this to take place in our lives
where we can make everlasting love in each
other's arms forever, Cause...
My love for you is infinite
For there's no beginning nor end

"A RENDEZVOUS FOR TWO"
FRITZ DELVA

Fritz Delva

UNTITLED

I woke up early this morning
To the sound of raindrops hitting my
window
My feet touch the smoothed wooden
floor
I look toward the window
But the morning fog has jaded my
view
I strain my eyes to see the dreams of
the day
I can hear your voice
And smell your ruffled hair and ten-
der skin like the morning rain
And feel your rough lips brush across
my naked shoulder
I shudder in the morning light
As I turn from the window
I face a clear view
I am alone
Bittersweet memories of you

"UNTITLED"

KATIE GIANFAGNA

Katie Gianfagna

Bare toes
small, healed sandals
painted piglets
Exposed calves and ankles
skirts hiked high past
knees
worn and adored
until the concept fades
Consultation
speculation, contemplation
Ejecute
Inculcate
gilded values
Hungry minds anticipate
Crave force-fed
tabloid drugs
Starve for perfect image
MTV providing
television hypnotizing
Shiny pages, magazine
glittering with Brittany,
corporate slave
synthetic fiend
a voodoo queen
piercing thoughts with
slender waist
Diets, extacy laced
young minds embrace
exterior decorations
ornamentation
symbols of pre-teen gen-
eration!
What would the public do
without soul prostitutes
like you?
Naval calling
attention wanting
above the hips
teens wish
would fit

the taunting pages
flashing screens
Ears on peers
attached deformities
Addicted to static and
uniformity
conformity
A race of cell phone
junkies
Unvoiced, misguided
no opinions, to the
world -blinded!
Puppets of silent
mental violence
Spice Girls, Backstreet
Boys
Half naked, over
masterbated
marketing toys
conveyor belt decoys
Inudustry
planning, waiting
world rotating
the universe
of this demonic reality
Money-making
child defacing
mind manipulating
idol inflating
bastards
Show me why youth
should be
branded with your
sameness
brainless
sex filled
labels
-Please.

"PLASTIC FACTORY"
HELENE CAPRARI

I'm not a queer, a fag, or a dyke, but I am different
Don't hate me because I'm not what you call "normal" or perfect
Don't hate me because you can't solve this; I'm not your puzzle
I have more resilience and courage against anything you can say
I have an intensity for life that pits me against you
I'm a woman - a woman you could never understand
Your naivety on life shows through your shallow heart
My eclectic spirit trounces on your ignorance
I've rose up from the ashes and now I'm fling past
Yep... maybe I am a queer, but don't hate me because I'm a dyke

MANUSCRIPT
LAURA SCHILLY



JEN TALLMAN
"UNTITLED"

C'NIGHT ANGEL C'NIGHT ANGEL C'NIGHT ANGEL

It's funny how things like age creep up on you. One moment in your life you are young, vibrant, filled with a passion the world has never known before you. Or at least that's what you believe. Yet, age somehow sneaks up on you, without your acknowledgment or permission. The wrinkles that appear along with the headaches and ups and downs of life's amusement park ride. Life, like a wooden roller coaster, a timeless classic, scary, exciting, and bringing an apprehension of infestation of termites that only encourage utter collapse. It's all very elusive, and I hate not remembering it at all.

I don't remember when the wrinkles started, or when my hair started to feel thinner and brittle. Somehow I still see what he fell in love with, the woman I was, not what I am now. I don't remember falling out of grace or beauty. Or ending up here in this bed, being fed small portions of food that is perfect for the old, the ones who can't remember how glazed carrots are supposed to taste. We who are unable to reference our past recollections of what the consistency of jello should be. I use, we to mean the collective of us, because as you age you bond with those around

you in a camaraderie that encompasses the aging in one undefined group. A group that loses value each day as well as the ability to control normal bodily functions, or to enjoy what the world offers to those who are limber and retain their hold on youth.

I sit in my room, dreaming of a Craftmatic adjustable bed, watching daytime television drone on, soap after soap, talk show, talk show, news, talk show, soap. So it goes. I am reminded I look good for 92 when the girls and boys from the local high school come to visit. Though visit is a poor choice of words that suggests voluntarism rather than force. They don't want to be here, they are just fulfilling graduation requirements of community service hours, or so they tell me. I refuse to start a sentence with "in my day," but we didn't have such things. We served or volunteered out of goodness not obligation. They come, they go, they listen, and they learn; they are at liberty to leave this place, we are stuck here. I am stuck here. In this home for the aging, the mentally ill, the handicapped, the feeble, the ones who are on their way out, the ones who have given up fighting, the ones no one wants to care for or about, the ones who have no one else left. That's why I am here.

I don't remember starting to lose him, it just began to happen. He was all I needed, and we were to grow old together. Maybe he didn't remember that part. I am growing old, but without him. I remember all of his wrinkles, and freckles, and his

smile. His favorite meal was roast beef, with thick gravy, carrots, and mashed potatoes. Sometimes it was the little things, like when he took off of work to help me take care of one of the kids, or bringing home flowers, or that puppy. The way he would lean over every night to whisper in my ear.

“G’night angel. I love you.”

That was all he needed to say, and I don’t remember when it started or when it became habitual. Alec never forgot to say it, he just did. Every time he said it, I blushed and I smiled. Thinking about it right now makes me do the same. I miss it, I miss him. Age does that to you. Here I sit, in my uncomfortable, lumpy, previously occupied by countless others bed, thinking and trying to remember yet all I have are fragments. I can’t remember if they are dreams or reality. All that I have is a fusion of the two, which I cannot decipher the difference between. Such is aging.

Alec never meant to leave me alone, I know. Neither did the kids, or so I like to believe. They have moved on with their lives, both of them, to be preoccupied with their own memories and children. Oh, they call, send cards, and visit occasionally for holidays. Sort of like holy days of obligation at the center for the “almost ready to relieve you of your burden.” So many people come in and out of life now though, that I can’t remember who’s coming or going. People pass down the gray hallway outside my dull ivory sterile room. Greetings come and go, so do good-byes.

Happiness is abundant in nurses

who turn you over or wipe your ass as they try to help you remain “dignified.” I ask you this, how can you be even remotely dignified if someone else is wiping you own behind? This regression to childhood, I don’t remember when that started either. Suddenly, there I was incapable of caring for my own bodily functions and needs. So I came here. I was sent here, is more like it. I don’t remember leaving the house in Greendale, the house that Alec and I made a home, where we raised Abigail and Ryan, and Buster. Our house, a small ranch of brick, white shudders, a chimney, and all the love we could muster. I don’t remember wealth or money, nor do I really ever remember being in a state of want. We just lived, and enjoyed and somehow time passed us by.

“Good afternoon Maria, how are we feeling today?”

The nurse entered the room with a bustling noise of white rubber sneakers and a starched uniform. She straightened my room, my blankets, tossed some large print books on the nightstand beside me and the ritual began. First, placing her hands on my shoulders, she pulled me gently towards her breast. Her perfume today wasn’t too strong, in the past I nearly asphyxiated. She fluffed and straightened the pillows behind me, and asked if I needed anything.

“Maria, dear, do you have any requests? What’s on the agenda for this evening?”

"Nikki, I am an old woman who barely has a concept of self. This evening's 'agenda' as you put it, is the same mundane thing as almost every other night. Dinner, reading, and maybe a song and dance number if I am up to it." This at least brought a good-natured chuckle from the two of us.

"Ah, a song and dance number? Tonight's performance, will be what?"

"I was thinking a modern dance piece, perhaps to Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata. Do you think that would be a good one?" I don't remember learning to dance, never having formal lessons, but Alec and I would make things up as we went along. Somehow it always flowed and followed the music, and I was never really sure who was leading who. It was more like free form floating, nothing fancy, just arms, legs and music.

Nikki eased me out of bed towards the bathroom. "I'll get you in, and then you can tell me when you need my help." She waited respectfully outside the door, while I lowered myself to the padded plastic seat to proceed with my "business."

"Alright Nikki, I'm done. I just need your assistance in finishing."

Once that routine was over with, I was back in my bed, alone. Occasionally, wanderers from the hall venture in and strike up a conversation, but friendships in homes like this are usually short lived. Attachments are rare, because they only end in heartbreak.

People are so quick to come or go or move, that it's rare to find enough time to develop meaning in someone's life before something changes. I try to remember their names, before they go, but no knowing makes it easier to accept. The faceless/nameless voids are then filled by the next applicants for our facility.

I don't remember even wanting to end up here, or thinking that I would. Somehow I believed Alec and I would just end up together, never really dying but moving onwards to the next place. Being old, aging isn't usually a focal point of life, or a typical conversation topic. It happens, and is accepted, but no one really plans for it. Financial security is one thing, preparing to become old is another. I don't remember when everything started to sag, or when impulses weren't quite as reactive as they had been. These are the little insecurities I face day to day, that wasn't ever outlined in a book or discussed in a class. They never tell you how to cope with the loss of life, youth, freedoms, it just seems like they dissipate until you can't remember where you left them.

It's almost time for dinner, and then you know the lineup: game show, game show, sitcom, sitcom, sitcom, sitcom, and the nightly news. Tonight I dined on dry turkey, green beans, mush that resembled tapioca, and some sort of rough pasty substance that may or may not have once been stuffing. My reading is light, the dull sounds of the television luring me into

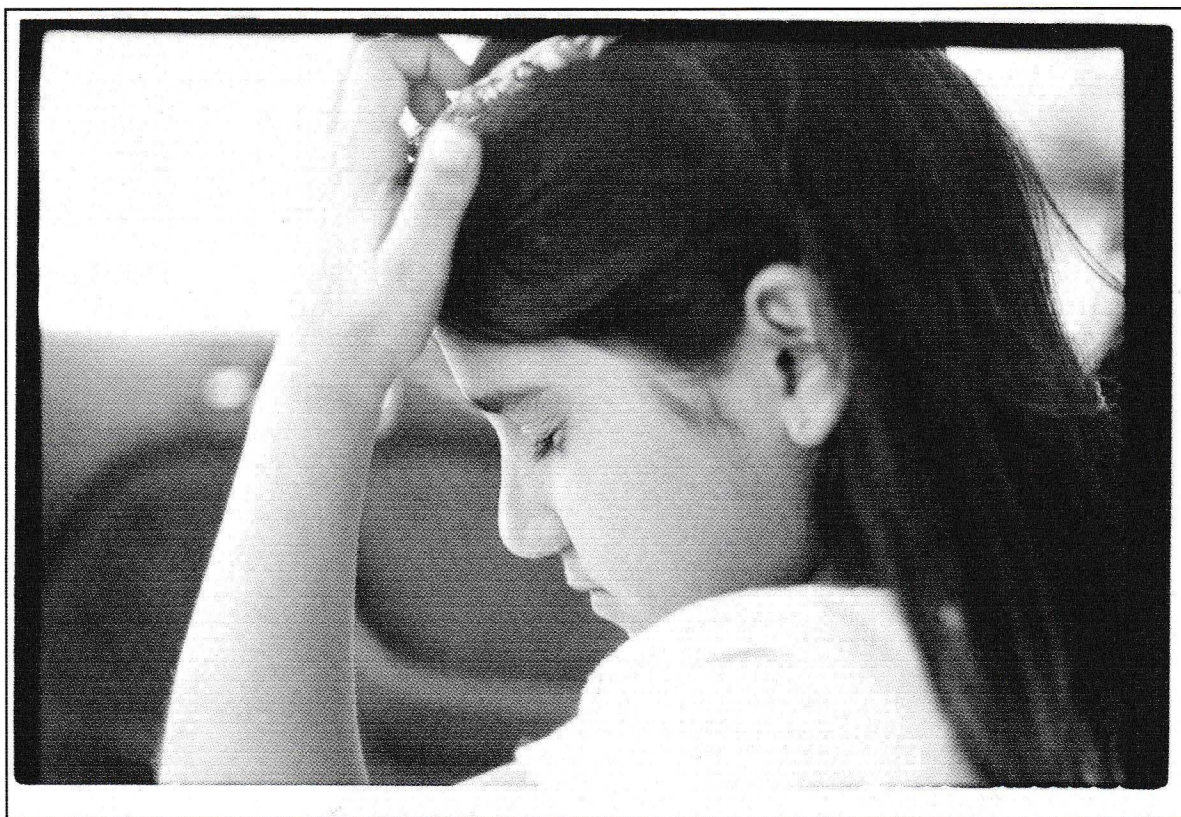
mindless thoughts. I wonder, that's it, just wonder. The pillows behind me bend with my frame, crumbling behind my back into the sleep position. I lean against them, they sort of wrap around me, in a quasi-comforting manner. I don't remember how Alec and I slept together, body to body. It doesn't feel like the pillows do, if only it did.

Slipping into unconsciousness, I swear I heard the faintest whisper.

"G'night angel. I love you."

G'night angel.
I love you."
DEBBIE BRANDT

"G'NIGHT ANGEL"



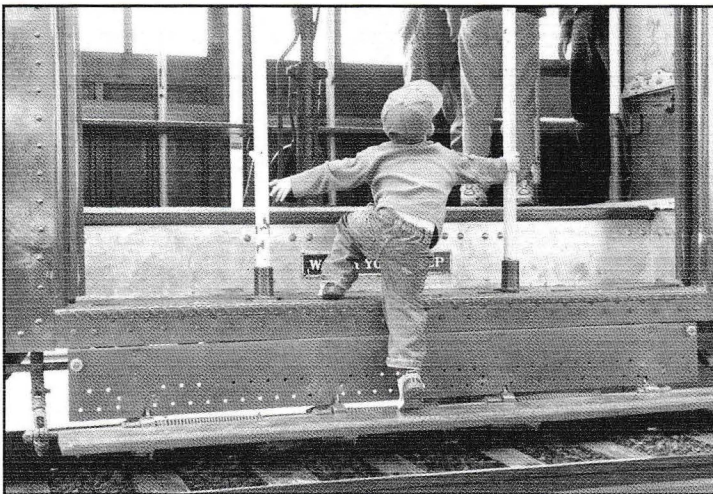
KATHLEEN AWAD
"UNTITLED"

AS YOU SLEEP

I watch you as you sleep
Thinking of what you're dreaming.
Is it of cool dips in the pool?
Or candlelit bathrooms, water steaming
Visions of beauty only you can see
Reds brighter than the reddest rose
Blues clearer than the bluest sea

I watch you lie there
With not a care in the world.
Protected within your mind
Like an oyster with its pearl.
As you open your eyes
your first sight is of me.
I hope my presence didn't wake you
As I watched you sleep.

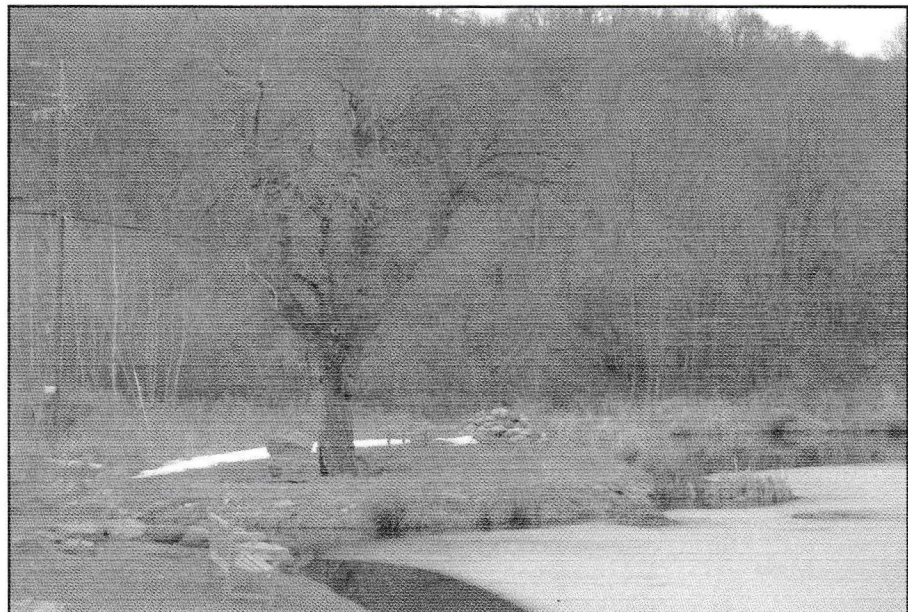
"AS YOU SLEEP"
LAMONT HENLEY



ADAM PLOINGER
"UNTITLED"



HOLLY SHIBER
"VACANT KNOWLEDGE"



JESS NIEMIER
"UNTITLED"

Megan passes the fried okra
Dad looks at his watch
Peter strains to hear the distant
background music
Because he doesn't want to be here
either

Mom enters the room
She sets her apron aside
She helps the chicken slide onto
the table
"Bon appetite" falls on deaf ears

We don't say grace anymore
Because Megan is an atheist
We don't use pepper because
Mom's allergic to it
We don't say much of anything
anymore

Peter drops his fork
"Oh... excuse me," he tells the
floor
But the NASDAQ has been drop-
ping too
Dad doesn't notice the fork

Mom's blouse is old and stained
I hope she hasn't been drinking
again
I hear her chewing, and fingers
prance by her plate
The chandelier seems shinier than
usual today

"So how's that Physics class?"
Megan makes the first attempt
Peter nods and slurps his Coke,
"Fine."
He doesn't want to talk about it

The chicken has been overcooked
We used to tell her to use a timer

I swirl it in my mashed potatoes
She forgot to bring out the barbecue
sauce

Dad imparts a healthy burp
"Excuse me," I imagine him say
And something smells like chocolate
The candy dish is empty

Mom stares at the barren walls
Too upright in her oaken chair
She's placed a napkin on her lap
Because it adds another layer

A car horn blares from down the street
The radio cuts to commercial break
Dad's cologne is strong and woodsy
We never really liked it much

I look up at the portrait we
Had taken several years ago
It's tilted to the left somewhat
Megan pours more carrot juice

And Peter needs a cigarette
He shakes the table with his leg
He's working late tonight, in the city
Mom and Dad don't know he smokes

The phone bleeps out and no one
moves
"Don't answer it, if it's that bitch."
Who Dad stopped seeing months ago
Sometimes we actually believe him

I raise my thumb and bite the nail
It makes a funny reflection in the glass
I see Mom's done something new with
her hair
I wish I'd noticed it earlier

A minute passes aimlessly
Then Megan coughs and starts

to choke
She hangs her head and I don't
look
We're reminded of her bulimia

She spits it out and wraps it up
And sets it down abashedly
Right across from Johnny's chair
It's been a while since he moved
away

"So did you hit the bank today?"
Dad finds room to speak some-
where
Dear Mom repents and folds her
hands
"No, I guess I'll cash it sometime
tomorrow."

She cuts her broccoli gingerly
Adjusts the checkered tablecloth
Peter once said it looked like a
deflated beach ball
I doubt he even remembers though

The birds swoop by and chirp their
thoughts
A double window keeps them at
bay
We're safer from them here inside
Than we are from one another

"So... anyone catch that film
about the kid who steals the pup-
pies
from his neighbor's crazy wife?"
Peter piffles awkwardly

"Not yet," Megan takes the bait
"But I hear it's totally abhorrent."
Mom applauds her using big words
I think it's a defense mechanism

"I was supposed to see it later
though," she adds,
"But someone lost my keys," at Mom
Peter's glad she's staying in tonight
He never liked her gothic friends

Before things get too interesting
Dad gets up and finds the sink
Leaves the dish for Mom to clean
He misses the Macintosh already

Megan rises and does the same
She's more important things to do
Peter ups and heads outside
Mom goes towards the caller ID

The clock moves on and skips a beat
I'm left staring at the plate
Still wondering just what it is
That makes us a family

BRIAN P. KELLY
"FRAGMENTS"

Tattered Bud on cold stiff bristles
Saw handle thick for gripping.
Damn that Stanley brush for hair
On fingers mad for ripping!

Frustration out their tips escaped
With each slam and yank.
When hatred had the tattered Bud
Its thorns fell void of rank.

Little Bud with hatred clashed
For in between the slams
Stuffing what could not be felt
A broken heart was jammed.

Unwanted when the truth be told
But tears erase not pain.
As dew that drops from Bud to Stem
They fall but still remain.

Tattered Buds and crunchy leaves
To clean brooks float away.
Hearts pump free away fear here
Where love has not to pay.

Wind and cold blows Stems to bend
And courage covers branches.
Safe beneath the cold long mend
Love takes the last of chances.

Springtime Buds most precious gifts
Stroke softly not to slam.
Tiny hearts are open to the lift
Gently prompted by a hand.

With love let brush angelic hair
When softest are the bristles.
Hands that feel know how to care
And pots that boil sound the whistle.

October Rose and tiny Buds
Make teatime party ready with
Cream pitcher- tray- sugar cubes
And an extra place for Teddy.

*Tattered Buds and
crunchy leaves*

To clean brooks float

away.

Hearts pump free away

from here

Where love has not to

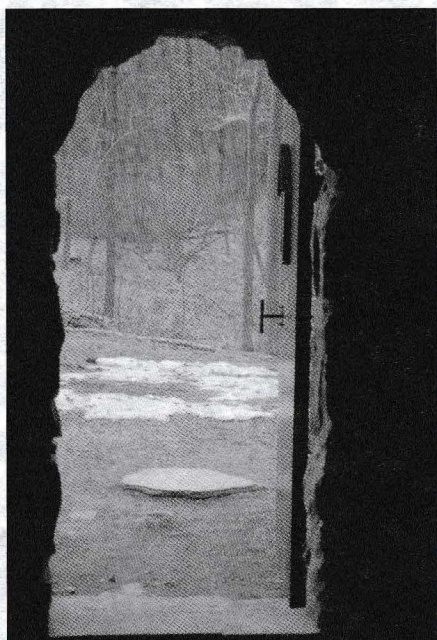
pay."



OCTOBER ROSES
KATHLENE AWAD

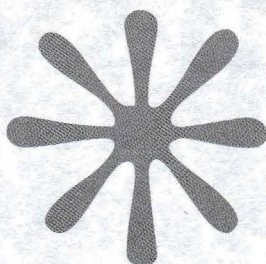
flying away i
see things i had and i lost
what am i doing?

HAIKU 3
JASON MCDERMOTT



"CALUMKILLE"
JESS NIEMIER

"MONARCH"
JEN TALLMAN



COLOPHON
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