

WILKES UNIVERSITY
MANUSCRIPT
fall 2005

MANUSCRIPT

FALL 2005



Dedicated to the Wilkes University community, and especially Dr. Mischelle Anthony, Dr. Larry Kuhar, Dr. Bonnie Culver, Debra Archavage and Jim Warner, all students and faculty in the Division of Humanities, and those involved in the Masters in Creative Writing.

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1947 Foreword

With this issue of MANUSCRIPT, a new publication is launched on the Bucknell University campus in Wilkes-Barre. Those who have been responsible for its coming into being earnestly hope that through your efforts and the efforts of those who come after you this magazine will develop into a college tradition of which we may all be proud.

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Death
Marissa Phillips

EARLY LIBRARY

LAUREN CAREY

Rejection Haiku

Rejection is a
difficult pill to swallow.
Accept this haiku.

Bath Time

Sometimes I'll sit in the bathtub
and watch my hands get pruny.
Pruny to the point that my fingerprints
are totally indecipherable.
They look so old, my hands.
Aged in contrast to my vivid nails.
I'm an old woman that doesn't realize
that I can't pull off purple nail polish anymore.
And the longer I sit, the older I get.
I get out because I don't want to die.



Untitled
Kathy Dalton



Heaven
Arthur Redmond

MATTHEW KOCH

Basement

Spider weave another web
The summer's almost over
The bugs will come and come again
Albeit somewhat slower

The traps laid, the poison left
Behind with the corpses
Of ants and wasps and other things
Of origin somewhat older

Do not fear the man who comes
And vacuums up your dinner
He is just the bastard son
Of autumn and of winter

Come out now, the light is off
Come and set the table
Your guests will be here shortly
God shall be your waiter

He will not be back down
Until the sun is come and gone
Although he hunts the others
He will not kill the artist

KOCH

Baby Bird

Lying there
dead
in the grass
bald
like a peeled
orange
I wish someone
would push me out



Life of a Mouse
Aleksandra Djordjevic

JASON SUTTON

Kal-El

Tonight Denny's is fogged in smoke. Okay, this morning; it's 3AM. I'm drinking chocolate milk and adding to the smoky atmosphere with a crumpled half-pack of Kools. Oh yeah, I'm cool. My eyes are drawn to the corner where some guy's cigarette tip is glowing green. Who is he? He looks familiar even though I don't know many guys in a three-piece suit, especially at 3AM. I keep my eyes on him...wow, glowing green. He's tired and wipes his glasses on his napkin. My heart skips a beat. I know who he is. I can't believe how clear it is now. His slicked back hair and specs threw me off, but it's clear to me now. I finish my chocolate milk and smush my embering butt. I can't believe my luck. In a cool, calm manner I stroll over to this bleary eyed man with the weird cigarette.

"So, which are you right now?" I add almost as an afterthought, "Hello." He takes a long green drag.

"Call me Clark." The aroma of his cigarette is weird. It's hard to place, but smells a little metallic...and maybe a hint of strawberries. Or is that cloves? I can't even tell these days. Clark must have seen me puzzling it out. "It's cloves and kryptonite."

"What?!" I yell in a whisper. A raspy scream. I can't believe this crap. Killing himself slowly. I tell him as much.

"What's the big deal? I've had a hard day and this relaxes me." He pauses. I stare. "Do you want an autograph or...?" I shoot him a poisonous look. Then I stalk back to my booth. I light up a Kool and just sit back. The smoke fills me and I blow it out. I'm fuming.

Superman smokes kryptonite cigarettes!

FARLEY LIBRARY



Perspective
Stephanie Pacifico

Solitaire With 51

People can be such douche bags. I absolutely mean that. Look at this guy. He's married with a family of three. Living the American Dream. White house, picket fence, a little dog. His wife is pretty. Okay, so she's packed on a few pounds. Big deal, that's what happens when you stick your penis inside of her but refuse the rubber.

That's not really anything you've never heard before. I know. However, I also know that this guy's had an affair with his secretary last year...twice. He went on long business trips to

Aruba and laid into her on the beach. He came to me and cleared his conscience.

And then his 19-year-old babysitter. Now he's afraid she's pregnant. She's destroyed and he's forcing an abortion if in fact his little guy did slip into her egg. I'm not really here to judge, but I had to ask him anyhow.

"Why don't you wear a condom?" There's a pause. I'm sure he has a furrowed brow on the other side of the mesh.

"What?"

"If you're going to sleep around you should protect yourself." I want to say to protect the others, too, but that would be lost on him.

"But...birth control's against my religion."

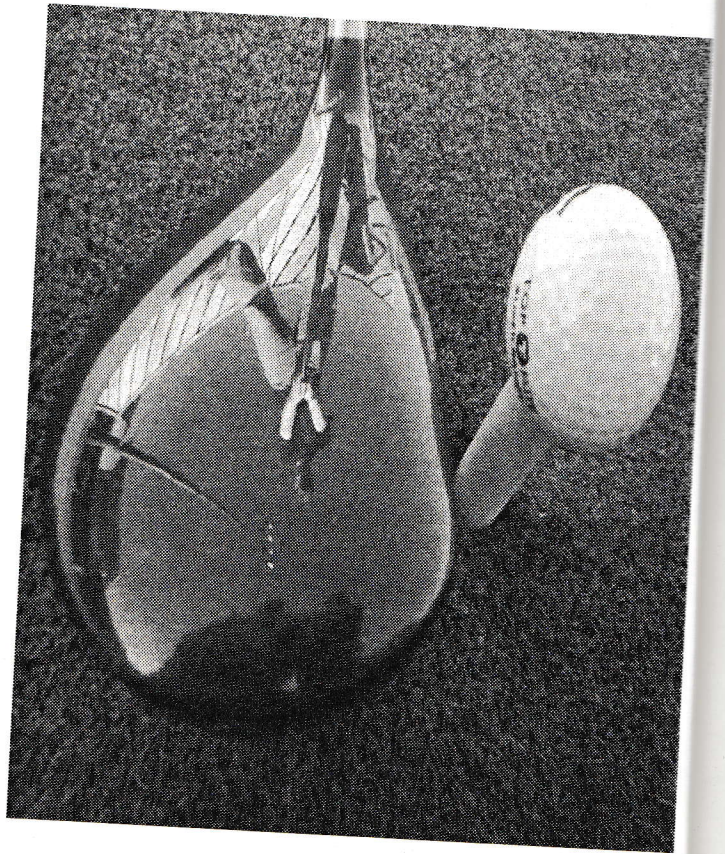
I am shocked. I am appalled. I am shocked and appalled. Of every excuse he could have said he played the religion card. I think I hate that worse than the race card.

So now I'm here dumbfounded, wanting nothing more than to shove my fist through this guy's mouth. God help me. Finally I just tell him to do eight Hail Marys. I hate Catholics.

I Love You(r panties)

**I like your new sweater.
My how nice your shirt is.**

**Let me tell you, you are hilarious.
Yes, I would love to see a movie with you.
If by drinks you mean making out, then sure.
No, I'll call you later, I promise.
Great! I can't wait to see you again either!**



Poised Golfer
Jim Feeney

AMY KASPRISKIE

Swing Set

It leaned depending on the wind
Rust spots curling up like teeth
Where I placed my finger.

Right...

Red ripe paint hanging over rain-soaked
Rubber smiles curling up above
Where I placed my feet.

Left...

Jigsaw Grandma

She lets them keep taking pieces of her away
he lets them keep taking pieces of her away
let them keep taking pieces of her away
keep taking pieces of her
keep taking pieces
taking pieces
a piece
pie
i am her

SCHECHTER

All is not
Come the black eve
Bodies dance, glistening in utter absence
As beauty



There Must Be Something in the Air
Raychil Arndt

FAMILY LIBRARY

Standing Green

A small town never seems a small matter to its inhabitants. The intricate, so delicately intertwined community happenings of innocent teenage heartbreaks and business corporation portfolio deadlines and those wise sufferers succumbing in a white sheeted hospital deathbed, counting their final moments: these were all merely life in the small town.

Sunlit valley hills bathed as the vast heaven's prisoner, surrounding the wannabe city folk. The forest green and bland chestnut grass blades were, indeed, the sea life of the place. There were no rubber-panted fisherman, no first day of trout season, no weekend cabin trips with Pop and Grandpop to the lake. The land was life here, the spectacles of underground manure recycled mindless spirits, driven there in the initial years of the spirits' nebulous existence.

Sunburned farmers, wearing so fashionably tainted and tattered coral suspenders, poured their hearts and souls into those never-ending wheat pastures and then passionately passed the simple life love to their apathetic sons and their sons. Less, the job became a chore and the chore became what was to those young boys and their boys a hellish nuisance. Nevertheless, the nuisance remained a sacred family tradition and footprints inevitably chased footprints. Should a break in the foot's journey occur, the imprints in the dirt would terminate.

Perhaps the small town itself was the entity at fault. One must remember the centuries before, of which mothers and grandmothers churned butter together and spoke of love, as it was so imaginatively titled, for it is a heartwarming fantasy: evident only in the outside world's black cosmos, or in this time, the crinkled yellow pages of a novel that sat collecting dust on each woman's nightstand. The question of love was somewhat of a misnomer. Simply, the idea existed that a young girl, upon entering womanhood, was rapidly warped and pressed and pushed and shoved in the stolid arms of a stately man of her family's choosing. What was passion from a robin's sunflower beak exploring the saturated earth on which the first spring rain pelted for the body of a squirming earthworm? Indeed, these had been

SCHECHTER

simple times. And though try as they might, the bodies of the world had strived to preserve the culture, or naked absence of it, for that matter. Minds were minds, in fact, and the innumerable quantity of grass blades blanketing the small rolling hills seldom stood erect for the evanescent time period of an eternity.

Conversely, the country folk, as they were very much the old-fashioned type, did, in fact, enjoy many retired pastimes. Several gatherings took place to welcome the upcoming spring beauty, one of which was the community agricultural fair. Oh, the humbling cattle stock and groomed pig shows and wool quilt sales always brought a hearty number to an emotional apex in these fourteen initial languid, seasonal days. As if by a lucky chance, the weather forever proved tasteful at this time. Granted, the inhabiting bodies could comfortably breathe the pleasantly sun-kissed air, at least in the literal sense, I am sure.

In this town, these eighty-three years, I sat at the intersecting streets of Mayford-Oxtaft Boulevard and Prifferlay Path. The former, so eloquently established with refined shops and upper-class estates, met at this very corner, tangled in a rendezvous with Prifferlay Path, a quaint, seemingly liberal district of "seize the day" yuppies and jolly street vendors selling their cherished belongings to the proud few with meager leftover pennies of lunch change.

A young boy about the age of six toddled along the sidewalk, his short blonde hair fluffing in the slight afternoon breeze. He was happy. I watched him now, alone and desolate in a meek world and... he is blind now. Where was the mother of this naïve being? With his stubby fingers and grimy hands he had a quarter now. Mere lunch change, indeed. And this boy, so far from recondite was so unconnected, so painstakingly absent from the world's evils. And he would find out soon and...he would die.

With this lunch change, the blonde spectacle hastily trotted to one of the hot dog stands, sedentary on Prifferlay. And with those stubby fingers and grimy hands, emphatically strained his limb, quarter in hand, to the vast blue infinity above, "By George, I've got it! I have the power! All power, I *am* alive!"

And what idiotic irony on the part of the senseless creature. This boy, this game, this misery, and my eyes were a fool. Or rather, his eyes were, for this blonde ant was sadly mistaken of his scanty presence in this world, this hell, this cage.

SCHECHTER

The hot dog vender so wretchedly pushed out a smile of excellence, yanking the boy's coin from his grasp to collect his own selfish collateral for this society's miniscule and fractured piece of bliss: the grease-saturated animal sausage. What a deal! Such a transaction. And these two bodies, in their foolishness, were "alive."

Go figure.

And so I turned my eyes on the friendly, teeth-grinning inhabitants and my attention traversed to a young couple, hand in hand, seated on a wooden park bench against one of Prifferlay's most salient sights: the laundromat.

What beauty a standing green maple elicited so near, in the form of shade by the imperious UV plague above.

But below...ah yes, the dual souls, surely bonding at the core...the core of all that is a plastic Easter egg. What young, untouched hand, with soft fingers and immaculate nails rested with that of the other hand. And the couple gazed into identical eyes. But so unfeeling they were. What delinquent sentiment of jolly ha-ha's and summer kisses to come! And while this encompassed beauty to the surrounding world, with smiles and winks from average passersby, had the couple been same sexed, homosexual, the world would frigidly twist the pair's paltry skulls into rice pudding, served in the high school cafeteria on Thursday afternoon. But this place was lovely, and no ugly existed.

So as I looked down upon the love and heard its gentle smooches, life was wonderful again, at least at nighttime, when the small town would be dark.

How many there were to gaze upon! The small children, even smaller adults. After all, the elder were only in larger body suits and no compensation was ever made to the mind of these beings demanding respect by age. As if years constituted goodness! The ignorance of these inhabitants was as a dull knife cutting stale bakery bread, and I chose to dwell on it for reasons defying my own logic. But there were many of these situations I had seen. Many. Several. And between my eyes caught a glimpse of yet another.

A pastel green parasol moved hastily down the sidewalk blocks of Mayford-Oxtaft, and there came to my view but a young lady under it. She was stocky in height, with chubby ankles, wearing pink pumps with a dainty ribbon around the calves. A bit

of prostitute manifested itself in her proud cleavage, cleavage to be proud of, in her eyes, with her open beige blouse with the buttons in the middle. Society loved her in this small town. She was, as many thought to be, "the unreachable." And for that reason, and that reason alone, the world was her oyster, the men her Barbies, and the women her bitches. She was strong. She was beautiful. And a woman of such stature could convince the invincible. She could deceive and cheat...herself. And this woman thought she was happy beneath her clothing layers of top-name brands and young boy stares. They were all young boys. Every one of them in that small town was a young boy.

So the coincidence presented itself of a young boy, in a young boy body, walking opposite this stature of greatness. He had a baseball, dirt in the edges, with a brown used leather mit in hand. It had been passed down, generations ago. And just as the grassy fields of farmers owned their sons and their sons, this baseball mit owned the boy. He desired a new, fresh beginning, a journey with an unsullied start. But this was life, at least in the small town, and with that, the boy by chance dropped his baseball in the steps before the woman's pink-ribboned pumps.

"Excuse me," the young boy so eloquently apologized, and what he became, and made his limbs reach to amend such a faulty mistake.

But this woman, negligent in her affairs with the young boy, passing by that standing green maple, continued her way on Mayford-Oxtaft. She had heard the slight ruckus of an endangered bluebird, and it had become disturbing to her senses. There it sat in the unresponsive rigid appendages of the standing green maple, my limbs of life. And with this miniscule bother, the woman reached in her brightly dyed cow leather handbag with the shiny shoulder straps for a handgun. And looking up at the standing green maple, and spotting the small bluebird singing its harmonious afternoon tune, the woman pulled the trigger and the bluebird listlessly fell beneath my vision, upon the stiff cement sidewalk blocks on the corner of Mayford-Oxtaft Boulevard and Prifferlay Path.

And soon the sound, the clatter, the step of the woman's pink pumps with the dainty ribbon were heard once again, crossing past the boutique with the anorexic mannequin in the window.

The boy, so apologetic for the catastrophic mishap

SCHECHTER

with his meager shoddy baseball, cast his damned eyes down to the sidewalk beneath the standing green maple, and with a skim of the taut bluebird, rushed his way around the corner to Prifferlay Path and ran on his seemingly merry way, underneath his clouded mind of the lingering mishap of the baseball.

And the bluebird?

With the sweep of a brush into a dustpan of black, an old man came along on this corner of Mayford-Oxtaft and Prifferlay Path. About thirty-nine and gruff in appearance, the man wore a thinning gray hair comb over, with thick tanned skin and a bit of whisker, much to his wife's disapproval, on his upper lip. The stubby fingers and hands of the tattered man's body grasped a broom, or a brush, and pushed the feeble bluebird. And there it rested in the black dustpan until it was put in a black trash bag that was tied with a black twisty, and thrown in the back of a black garbage truck which the old dowdy man, wearing nothing but tattered jean overalls, jumped on the back of with the foot of his shit-covered boot and held on for dear life, as one '79 Classic silver BMW plunged its way through the red traffic light from the opening of Mayford-Oxtaft Boulevard.

And no one screamed or looked up as the clash gnawed through metal of the bumpers that protected and the people driving their mouths open wide as a canyon. And as pool balls on a table in a smoky bar with drunks, the vehicles ricocheted and hit the standing green maple on the corner of Mayford-Oxtaft Boulevard and Prifferlay Path.

And the unforgiving dent in that standing green maple of eighty-three years was its voyage catalyst to the imagined world above, or below, or neither. And it fell crossing the intersecting streets of the small town, a diagonal touching both corners. And with my eyes, the vast blue infinity rested before me.

To the people of the small town I left, collapsed.

down to the
skim of the
erlay Path
clouded mind

ack, an old
Prifferlay
an wore
and a bit
er lip. The
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FAMILY LIBRARY

Backyard
Faith Wydra

LYNDA COOK

Empty

Tears stream down,
Following the well worn path,
Of the face,
That was once without furrow.

Silence speaks volumes,
To anyone who listens,
To the voice,
That once had much to say.

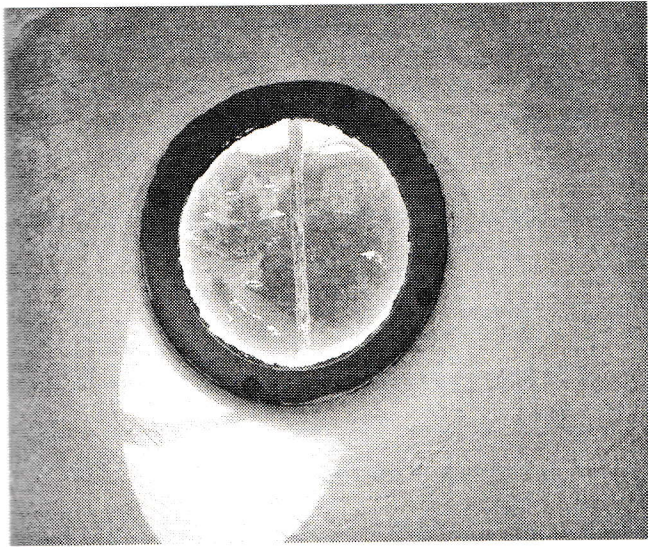
Blindfolds are comfort,
Filtering out the light of truth,
To the eyes,
That once wished to see.

Darkness becomes a haven,
Providing a place of shelter,
To the body,
That once had no reason to hide.

A notion of love,
Is slow to retreat,
From a heart,
That was once lulled into belief.

The void is what remains,
When clarity sets in,
In the soul,
That is now empty.

ALEKSANDRA DJORDJEVIC



Cape May
Clarissa Dudeck

Daisy Charmer

The wind carries her petaled prayers with it at night.

She lies under a blanket of stars,

Her dreams and wishes threading themselves into the orbit of a rising sun.

She will awaken soon,

Her silky voice enchanting you with its steady "He loves me, he loves me not" groans.

I was there with her when it happened.

FAMILY LIBRARY

DJORDJEVIC

Saw her topple over like a porcelian doll from a shelf

Into a sea of sterile grays and whites.

You must be careful, I told her, for there is gold to be found here,
but only if you
are careful.

She was careful, fortunately; she came through it alive and in one
piece.

The Daisy does not deceive.

She keeps her pale-petaled-pink self on 'til she can no longer keep
her secrets.

Hers is the language of little girls and far-fetched hopes.

Hers is a little green center that floats on and on with the spring,

with every criss-crossed

chrysanthemum'd

imagining.

She considers her life and how the west was won.

She considers how, with only a touch of season, how soon her life
has miraculously
begun.

DJORDJEVIC

Only I Know

My brother says he dreams of a magic memory that has been born
from the joining of
two seeds:

one, a rose, and one, a woman.

He says he cannot get the image of this fairy rose-girl out of his
mind.

She convinces him each night to cross the barrier between earth
and sky and

wants desperately to enter a world only she and St. Therese of
Lisieux know.

My brother has a poster of this saint by his bedside now and says
that she was
probably this

earthen rose-girl.

"All art comes from God," I say.

His mind plays tricks on him.

FAMILY LIBRARY

DJORDJEVIC _____

Hair

It is winter now and the tree I used to love to look at has shed her curly wig of red.

I can see little bits of leafy dandruff in her branchy scalp and mother tells me I moan in my sleep,

wanting to know when spring will come to restore her.

Snowflakes decorate her with pearls of attachment and I know she thinks about me and when I

will return to adorn her with the charms and trinkets of cherry blossom petals and orange

butterfly wings I find in the street on a good day.

I tell her, I don't like you this way with all your hair buried under and all around you.

Forgive me, she says.

I will be more beautiful again soon.

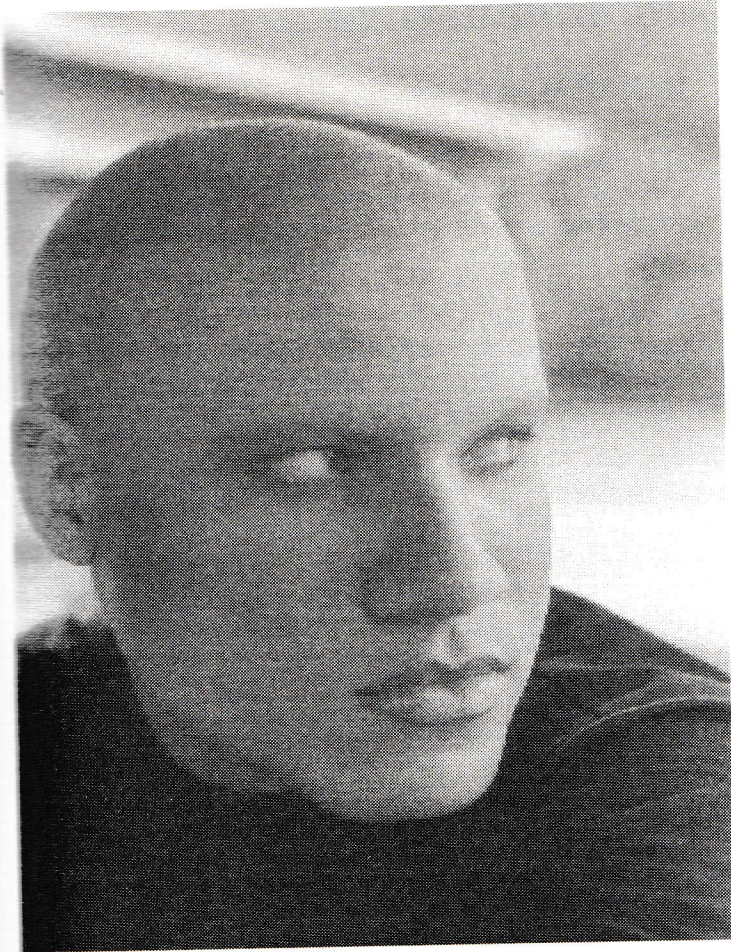
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FAMILY LIBRARY

Alien Encounters
Raychil Arndt

one will



CAREY LIBRARY

Iris in the Sky
Lauren Carey

HOLLAND

all Rage cared about was getting to his damn McDonald's and getting hashbrowns for the first time in a month.

The day started to go downhill when Rage arrived at what should've been his McDonald's only to find it closed due to a small kitchen fire, according to the sign on the doors. It looked as if the restaurant had burned away, never mind what the sign had said. Rage cursed under his breath, trying to think of another McDonald's he could get to fast enough. There was one, but he'd have to run to make it on time. He thought about the hot, crispy chunks of processed potatoes and decided that it would be worth the run.

He took off down an alley and across a small side street mostly used for parking and was immediately in a classier, or at least more expensive, section of the city. He continued to run down the streets and through alleys, using the speed that had helped him make track, which was the only reason he had graduated high school. Barely. It was the sixth alley he passed, next to an old brownstone building, where the shit really hit the fan.

At first, when he was approaching, he had thought the mewling noise was just a cat looking for breakfast. It wasn't until he heard the angry voice that he realized the sounds were coming from a child.

Rage stopped running and backed up to the entrance of the wide, deep alley between the apartment buildings. He could make out what the man was saying now.

"Stop whining, you little shit!" This was punctuated by a sound like a slap. "Your father is getting too possessive of his little toy." There was a pause and the whimpering sounds abruptly stopped. "Unbutton your pants right now, you little brat, or you know what'll happen."

Rage didn't listen to any more. He stalked down the alleyway, his face expressionless, his body tight. He saw an older man, balder, with a paunch pushing against his expensive polo shirt. More importantly, he saw the short knife in the man's hand and the little girl he was holding, whose pants were on the ground.

He felt something inside him snap. "What the *fuck* do you think you're doing, old man?" he growled, moving closer.

The older man whipped around, dragging the little girl with him, holding onto her shirt collar with his free hand. He pointed the knife at Rage. "Back off. My kid, my business," he

said, his eyes alive with anger and a cold sickness.

"Not this time." Rage had never wanted to kill someone this much. He'd seen sick people before, but this time he had a chance to stop it.

The man grabbed the child by the hair and yanked her head back, pointing the knife at her. "Jessie is mine. No stupid punk asshole is going to ruin my morning. Do you have any idea who I am, kid? I can do whatever I want to her." As if to prove his point, the man released the child's hair and ripped at her flowered underwear.

Rage moved at the same time the little girl did. Everything seemed to slow as Rage watched in shock as the child snapped forward, her delicate hands snatching the knife from the man and ramming it into his throat.

The man choked, his eyes bulging in surprise as he fell to his knees. Blood sprayed as the girl kept her hand on the knife and ripped sideways.

Rage's forward momentum halted. In shock, he watched the man fall onto his face, twitching as blood continued to pour out his throat. Movement made him look up from the dying man to see the girl moving slowly away, her eyes on the body. She tripped over her undone pants and fell hard on her bottom, but didn't cry out. Blood was all over her t-shirt and spattered across her face.

His first thought was to go to the little girl, but he tripped over an out-flung hand and she made a small noise. He stopped in his tracks and looked back and forth between the little girl and the now very dead man on the alley floor.

Ohhhhh shit.

Big black man, dead white guy who looked at least mildly rich, one stunned, blood soaked, obviously abused little white girl. Not exactly the best picture to present to the police. Rage could feel panic starting. Curiously, it hadn't started when the dead guy had pointed a knife at him; that happened all the time. It was the dead part with the kid that bothered him.

All he had wanted were hashbrowns.

Rage looked at the child. She was staring at him, her face like a doll's. "Okay, don't freak out, all right, honey?" He moved a little closer and she seemed to shrink into herself. She looked towards the body and he instinctively moved to block her view. She drew back and wrapped her arms around herself, but her eyes

HOLLAND

never left his.

"Look, Jessie, right?" Rage tried again, crouching in front of her to make himself seem smaller and less intimidating. "I'm not like him. I'm not going to hurt you. We just can't stay here right now. Will you come with me?" Very slowly he reached out and wiped the blood off the girl's face. The kid only looked about six years old, but her eyes, a brown so dark it was almost black, were older than any adult's he knew.

As he touched her face, she didn't move, but he could feel her retreating. "Please, girl child, we can't stay here, and you have to come with me willingly. I'm not gonna leave you here, and I can't drag you around." Rage kept his voice as soft as possible, not wanting to scare her anymore. "Jessie, is that your name?" The child nodded, sending blonde hair across her face. She used it like a curtain, but he didn't give up. "That's a really pretty name. Mine is Rage, kinda weird, huh?"

The blood was already absorbing onto her t-shirt, which was dark blue, nearly hiding the color. If he was lucky and no one looked at them very closely, people wouldn't notice the bloodstains on her shirt until after he had figured out what to do. But to have that happen, she had to trust him. Or at least come with him willingly.

Slowly, he extended his hand towards her. "If you come with me, we'll find your family, I promise. I haven't hurt you, I won't. I promise. Hell, anything has got to be better than it was with this guy, right?" He tried to smile when her eyes peeked out at him again.

"He was my uncle," she said, her voice very soft and young. Rage felt his stomach lurch as he took this in.

"Well, maybe we won't find your family," he said, glancing back to make sure the man was really dead and he wouldn't get to kill him. Then he felt her tiny hand in his and looked back. "Let's go, girl child."

God, he was so tired. How long had they been on the move? Rage glanced down at Jessie, who was still holding onto his hand. The kid looked fine, but there were still bloodstains all over her t-shirt. Hell, he couldn't take her to a hotel like this. It was going to be weird enough to get a room without people thinking he was a pedophile. Still, the shirt had to go.

HOLLAND

Rage began to watch the stores they passed, occasionally looking down at Jessie. Her face was still as perfectly bland as a doll's. Finally, they found a Wal-Mart and he gratefully dragged her inside.

The first thing he saw was a clock stating that it was 10:46 p.m. They'd been running for over twelve hours. He saw a greeter coming towards them and panicked. He ripped off his vest and knelt in front of Jessie, holding it up. "Okay, we really can't let anyone see you like this, Jessie. Will you let me put this on, just for a little bit?" he asked, keeping his voice low.

The little girl stilled for a moment, her big brown eyes fixed on Rage's face. Finally, she nodded and he quickly stuffed her arms in the holes and zipped the vest up. It fell to her knees and looked ridiculous, but it covered the bloodstains.

Rage stood up just as the grandmotherly greeter reached them. "Why, hello and welcome to Wal-Mart. We'll be closing in fifteen minutes, will that be enough time to finish your shopping?"

"It'll have to be." Rage grabbed Jessie's hand and moved towards the clothing section. The children's section was like a personal nightmare to him. There were frills and pink and chubby cartoon characters everywhere. He had no idea where to start. He looked at Jessie's small, narrow frame and grabbed a pack of three different colored t-shirts in small. Just to be safe, he grabbed another pack in medium. Underwear came in six packs, thank God. Then they hit the pants section and all the confidence he had built died. Pants didn't come in packs and there were way more sizes than just small, medium and large.

Jessie was no help; she just stood next to him and clutched at his hand. He measured her with his eyes and grabbed one pair that was way too big. Luckily the next pair looked as if it might fit. He grabbed everything and cursed himself for not getting a basket.

With one eye on the clock, they breezed past the men's section, briefly stopping to pick up a large, black hooded sweatshirt for Rage. With six minutes left, they headed towards the personal care section. He handed two toothbrushes to Jessie to hold and looked at the toothpaste selections.

"Do you like cinnamon, Jessie?" Rage asked, not looking away from the wide array of toothpaste. There was no answer, but when he looked down she was nodding her head. He grabbed the

HOLLAND

cinnamon toothpaste and a travel size of his favorite deodorant.

They made it to the cash register with two minutes to spare. Rage dumped everything on the belt, then picked out two candy bars and added them. As the girl at the cash register rang up stuff and tried to flirt with Rage, he kept an eye on Jessie, who no longer clasped his hand, but stayed very close to him. The girl finally realized she wasn't going to get Rage's number and tallied up the total.

He saw the amount and whistled low under his breath. He pulled out his wallet and emptied the billfold of everything but a five. "You certainly are expensive, girl child," he said softly. Jessie flinched, but said nothing.

Rage picked up the bags and Jessie latched onto the corner of one of the plastic bags. Together they walked out of the store and Rage quickly moved them around the corner of Wal-Mart so they were out of view. He dropped the bags on the ground and fished out the pack of medium t-shirts. He drew out a pale blue one and handed it to Jessie, who looked at him blankly.

"Look, we can't be walking around with blood all over you, okay?" Rage explained, "I'll turn my back and you change your shirt. I promise not to look." To prove his point, he got to his feet and turned his back.

There was some hesitation and then he heard the sound of a zipper and then some rustling noises. He turned back around when he heard the zipper again. She was trying to get his huge vest zipped up around her small frame.

"You cold?" he asked. She nodded, her big eyes trained on his. He knelt in front of her again and zipped the vest for her. Rage was getting cold as well, standing in the night air in nothing more than pants and a tight white tank. For himself, he fished out the black sweatshirt and ripped off the tags with his teeth. He stuffed them back in the bag, not wanting to leave many traces behind. He stuffed the bloody t-shirt into a bag as well, planning to burn it later.

With both of them dressed, Rage got them moving again. "We need to find an ATM before we can find a place to stay, so keep an eye out, okay, girl child?" he said softly. Jessie nodded and took her eyes off her feet and began to pay more attention to her surroundings.

Five minutes later she tugged on Rage's sweatshirt and

pointed to a glowing ATM between two closed stores. He smiled and gently patted her head. "Good job, Jessie. I completely missed it." It took another half-hour before he found a motel that he was willing to take a little girl into. It probably still rented by the hour, but it at least looked as if they changed the sheets.

They had a little bit of a problem with the night clerk, who kept looking at Jessie and then glaring at Rage as if he were a pervert. He got the key and room number as quickly as possible and moved down the hall. Jessie was really lagging at this point, although she still hadn't complained.

They got into the room with a problem, but when Rage turned on the lights, one bulb immediately blew. Jessie flinched away from the sparks, pressing herself against his leg.

Exhausted, Rage cursed, but he was too tired to deal with getting the manager. He told Jessie she could have the far bed and then flopped down on the small bed closest to the door.

There was a small hesitation, but then Rage felt the bed give under the slight weight of Jessie climbing onto it. He rolled over to find her very close.

"Don't you want to cuddle?" she asked, her voice small and confused. She had taken off his vest and was fidgeting with the hem of her t-shirt.

"Uh...cuddle? Yeah, sure, if you want." Was this some kid ritual he had missed out on? If it made the kid happy, it was fine with him.

At his answer her eyes flickered and she hung her head, her light blonde hair falling forward to form a curtain. She crawled closer, almost on his lap. With hesitant fingers, she reached for the buttons on his fly.

At first he didn't realize what she was doing, he was so tired. Then he realized his pants were being undone and he shot off the bed. "Whoa!" Rage grabbed his pants and made sure they were secure.

On the bed, Jessie was kneeling, looking completely terrified and confused. "You said you wanted to cuddle. Did I do it wrong?" She sounded like she was going to cry.

Shit. Shit, shit, shit. He was way out of his league here. "Umm...you know how your uncle was a really bad man? Well, some of what he said isn't really what it means." Rage could feel himself sweating. God, he didn't know how to comfort a highly

HOLLAND

abused child. "Did what he do make you uncomfortable?" he asked, kneeling next to the bed.

Jessie nodded once, quickly. "Hurt," she said, softly. Watery eyes peeked out from beneath her tangled strands of hair and her cheeks were wet from painfully silent tears. Rage felt his heart clench. Sweet Jesus.

"Right. Umm...I'm not mad at you at all. Just, uh, it's not good for men, hell, anyone, to touch or make you touch them like that, okay?" He pulled on one of his dreads, trying to think. "If I say something that makes you uncomfortable, tell me and I'll explain what I mean. I'm not like your uncle."

"It wasn't my uncle. My papa liked to cuddle, uncle just liked to fuck me," Jessie said, her voice emotionless.

Rage flinched, feeling as if he had taken a body blow. He held onto the bed as he hung his head and tried not to throw up. "Mother of God," he breathed, not sure if it was a prayer or an obscenity.

He looked up to see Jessie still watching him. "Right, I'll deal with what I can. Jessie, it's not good to say fuck. And your family is a bunch of disgusting bastards. I...damn, are you tired?"

Jessie nodded, still crying. He reached up to wipe her tears, but hesitated, not wanting to scare her anymore. "You can sleep in this bed. Do you want to change into something more comfortable to sleep in?" he asked. She nodded again and he looked around for something. Nothing he had bought her was big enough for a nightgown. He pulled off his sweatshirt and tossed it lightly on the bed next to her.

He walked towards the bathroom as Jessie began to change her clothing. Rage flicked the light on, shut the door and walked straight towards the sink. He turned on the cold water and stuck his head under the flow. He stayed under the water for awhile then flung his head back, gasping as droplets flew from the ends of his dreads. His fingers whitened on the edge of the sink as his grip tightened.

The thought of what that little girl had gone through was driving him crazy. Rage took a few more deep breaths and tried to calm himself. He considered it a personal victory that he hadn't thrown up.

After one more breath, Rage opened the door and flicked off the light. Jessie was under the covers, her eyes focused on the

bathroom door and him.

He tried to smile at her and said, "Go to sleep, honey. I'll stay in the other bed all night long. I promise." Rage crawled into the other bed and clicked the bedside lamp off. He was so exhausted his eyeballs felt like they were sticking to his eyelids. It still took forever for him to fall asleep. There was no sound from the other bed.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

EARLY YEARS



Mommy Never Loved Me
Raychil Arndt

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SABRINA McLAUGHLIN

Daughters of Our Thought

Chasing this white rabbit
In the lee of the carillon tower
On campus
I am not playing Alice
With my displaced maternal instincts.
Chasing white rabbit children of memory
Through my rainy-sunny morning,
Daughter of my thought,
My imperfect poetry,
Your burning cinnamon,
I am breathing in.
Clever, artful witches,
Brewing love-tea,
All our words are about the same things.
Palliative for your pains,
Penance for your sins—real and imagined, my love.
Read me the signs in the weather,
In the moods of the river,
And the swirling of the red tea stain.
Was it Amos, or Isaiah,
Who walked naked
Through the villages of Samaria
Chewing on the papyrus scrolls?
One mad prophet
Who would say,
“Give me the words
To be born into being
And then swallowed.
Devoured in this god-eating,
Text-eating ritual.
The Scriptures are within me.”

CAROLYN LINDEN



Sunset
Kathy Dalton

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Awake

I want none of your post-modern overdoses—
You take it too far,
Beyond all relevance.
I watch them—
Discontented, dissipated, depressed,
In a stupor,
Caterpillars crawling on puff-clouds
Of opium and pot-smoke.
We are young and American,
Our brains are pickled in cheap wine,
Our livers are sopping bar towels,
Our hearts are bruised windfall apples
Fermenting in the sun.
Our grandfathers chewed bullets
And tasted fascism.
Our fathers lost their souls
In waves of napalm,
Their minds dissolved
In Agent Orange,
Or their innocence broken
Under billy-clubs
And buried with their murdered prophets.
We just feel helpless.
Listen,
The sainted sinners
Will save this land
From the sinning saints.
Take to the path
With bells, whistles, and drums,
Carrying your prayers
Your “doves with claws”—
Or fall out of the sky
In multitudes
Like passenger pigeons
Shot down with apathy arrows.
And then what will you do,
When they make the birds fall

McLAUGHLIN

Out of your blue sky
Turning iron-gray?
Put them back.
Make me a fiddle that sings out come-cries,
Pleasantly dirty-gritty
And supply strung,
Play us like violins.
Cut the reins of the electric
Red-inky and many-coloured
Loco horses of your blood
And let them fly through you fast.



*Innocence And Culture Shock
in Miyajima, Japan*
Heather Werner

COREY PAJKA

Mr. Jesus, or The Prophet Drove a Shiny, White Ice Cream Truck

Barrett Charybdis inhaled long and deep on the pipe, letting the plume of smoke wind down his throat. He bristled as it filled the expanse of his lungs; he marveled at the spout of misty smoke as it left his mouth seconds later.

Marijuana, he thought, *the drug of choice for those who aren't big drinkers and are either too poor or too frightened to try coke. Like me.*

Barrett sat for a few minutes as time slipped away from him. He contemplated a Salvador Dali reprint on the wall, observing how the liquid from the melting clocks seemed to overflow its plastic frame barrier. It wasn't long before he was ankle-deep in the yellow and gold-toned ebb tide of *The Persistence of Memory*. Shortly, Barrett's very room was drowning in the Surrealist period of Modern Art, taking him along in its undertow. He clawed for the open air just inches above his head, struggling to keep his mind about him.

"I am soooo stoned," he murmured, aloud now. The room had taken on the gold hue of sheer contentment in the in-between. He was nowhere and everywhere at once; all was right with his world.

His days were near-perfect replicas of this one as of late. Since graduating from Montclair State University just a few months earlier, his time was a beer-drenched collection of hours, rounded out by periodic intervals of pot-induced stupor.

Barrett's decadence was a glorious waste of life. He set the open Miller Lite he had been sipping on the glass diploma frame he had been using as a coaster. Barrett had meant to put his History degree in it sometime, he had meant to hang it somewhere proudly on the wall. He had meant to do a lot of things, but the growing pile of laundry in the corner caught his eye now.

Barrett thought of those posters he used to see in Sunday School: "I know I'm special, 'cause God don't make no junk."

He laughed long and deep at the trivial nature of it. The absurd simplicity was simply overwhelming.

PAJKA

What more can I be except what I am, he thought. A historian with no concept of the present; just a piece of paper that qualifies me for whatever job I'm now entitled to receive.

Enough philosophy; he tossed all his remaining clothes into his laundry basket and gathered up all the quarters he could find, pushing aside the blurred corners of his vision as he moved. Walking through the gold pools of liquid collected on his carpet, he pulled together his detergent and made his way down the street to the Laundromat.

The sidewalk undulated in pantomimic tidal waves. Dark haze crept in at the corners of his eyes as his concept of up and down lost all earthly principles. The sound of all life around him was amplified ten-fold; cars whizzed past at sonic-boom inducing velocity, a bird's sweet song made his eardrums rupture.

Off in the distance, he heard another noise, a sporadic collection of electronic beeps arranged around some kind of loose, haphazard pattern. He listened for a few repetitions until he was able to make out the tune. Sunday School. Choir. Canned Christian melody.

"What Child is This?" Barrett said aloud. The sound grew larger, closer, more menacing. Barrett felt it creeping up on him like some vision of a forthcoming apocalypse.

It was then that he finally saw it. A white mass moving toward him through the THC-muddled density of day. It blared prepackaged Christian Muzak, it gleamed resurrection white in the afternoon sun.

The form moved in closer to him, its electronic musical blips increasing in urgency. By now it had become aware of Barrett's presence. It moved up alongside him, "The First Noel" playing in Casio-recorded glory. It pulled to a stop as he read the black-lettered banner on its side: "Good News Ice Cream."

Heaven had come to earth in the form of an ice cream truck.

"Greetings, brother," the driver shouted over the truck's Muzak. Barrett swore he was looking onto the visage of Christ himself.

The driver wore his shoulder-length hair with a middle part where it rippled in waves. His beard complemented his slight build marvelously, and were it not for the white Good Humour oversuit he wore, Barrett would have believed he was witnessing

the Second Coming.

"Can I interest you in some ice cream?" the driver said, "it's an awfully hot day."

Barrett stood dumbfounded, his grip on the bag slackened, allowing it to fall to the ground. *I'm stoned off my ass*, he thought, *I'm in no condition to meet God. He'll be pissed!*

"Do you know who I am?" Jesus asked. "I'm a representative of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. This is the Good News Ice Cream Truck."

"Okay," Barrett mouthed, his tongue struck dumb by this Good Humour Christ.

"This ice cream truck is just a little thing we do to spread awareness of God's love for us all. It's geared more towards kids, but hey, who doesn't love ice cream, right?"

"Ice cream is good." Barrett could barely utter a sound, he was awestruck in the presence of the Frozen Dairy Messiah.

"Begging your pardon, but you look lost," Jesus continued. "I know the feeling. I wandered around for a while. I smoked some weed, had all sorts of illicit rendezvous, the standard stuff."

"The last temptation of Christ," Barrett muttered. Jesus stopped sorting through the truck's freezer just long enough to laugh.

"Yeah, I guess you could say that. But I'm only telling you this because you remind me a lot of myself. You're only about three or four years younger than I am."

Barrett's mouth was dry and arid. His tongue yearned for some measure of relief.

"Could I have an ice cream sandwich, please?"

"Hmm? Oh, sure."

Jesus fumbled through the freezer until he came up with a frozen rectangle wrapped in white paper.

"Here you go," he said.

Barrett unwrapped the sandwich and watched as the summer heat caused small waves of steam to rise off of it. "Body of Christ," he mumbled.

"What was that?"

"Nothing. I'm just in a contemplative mood." Barrett looked down at his ice cream sandwich, already rapidly melting, and felt streams of vanilla ice cream pool in his hand.

"Well, I can empathize," Jesus interjected, "You just graduated, didn't you?"

"How did you know that?"

"Oh, I have my ways. Just something about that lost look you have. It's very recognizable. You're searching for something. And your ice cream is melting."

Barrett glanced at his arm and noticed the lines of melted vanilla crisscrossing it like tiny rivers of Jordan. He drew his arm to his mouth and licked them off.

"Let me tell you something, pal," Jesus chimed in again. "The purpose of this truck is to spread the Good Word, but I'll give you another word instead."

Somewhere close, the electronic beeping resumed.

"I'm not going to cram ideology down your throat, I just want you to know that you're worth far more than you give yourself credit for. There is a reason you exist."

"I'm a history student," Barrett blurted, noticing the music growing louder.

"A student of all that once existed, and was great," Jesus continued. "Do you like your ice cream sandwich?"

"It's very good," Barrett said, having not yet taken a bite.

"You are a glorious, luminous being, my friend," Jesus declared. "Whether you believe it or not, there are people out there who love you, care for you, would go to the ends of the earth for you."

"I guess I'm just lucky." The day was awash with holy white noise.

"You're more than that, you are holy. You are one. You are a member of this glorious human race. Celebrate it. Embrace it. Use it."

"Okay."

"Earn it. The ice cream's on me."

"Okay." The ice cream sandwich had nearly melted away completely, a stain on his clothes in their basket on the pavement below. The truck's music grew to a near-deafening crescendo in his drug-addled mind; it was "The Hallelujah Chorus." Jesus began to pull away.

"Remember: a life for a life!" Jesus declared.

Barrett watched the truck disappear over the hill and listened as the Muzak faded out of earshot. He had half a mind to

shout, *Thank you, Jesus*, but he couldn't get past the silliness of it. He would remain a doubting Barrett. Though from out of the corner of his eye, he swore he saw a white bird swoop into view and then vanish.

The white dove was a pigeon. It landed at his feet and poked at the melted ice cream sandwich that grew sticky on the asphalt.

Barrett Charybdis gathered up his belongings and walked alone, his feet sticky with molten ice cream, a newly converted disciple of the Dairy Truck Church of Christ.

* * *

He awoke the following morning on his couch. Beside him was a pile of freshly folded laundry. The T.V. gave off a warm, pleasant glow as the morning news droned on.

Barrett sat up with a start, his mouth dry and stale, his head a cavalcade of hammers. He tasted his hands. They were still sticky sweet from the previous day's offering of ice cream sandwich.

I hope there's still some beer left, he thought as he made his way into the kitchen. Barrett fumbled through the refrigerator when the report on the morning news interjected.

"Morning travelers are advised to avoid Interstate-81 today due to an accident involving a Christian-themed ice cream truck. The truck had apparently stalled in the middle of oncoming traffic early this morning when it was struck by an eighteen-wheeler. Only minor injuries, and one death, that of the man driving the ice cream truck, have been reported."

Barrett caught a clear glimpse of the wreckage. It was without a doubt the same truck. From deep within he swore he saw the outstretched arms of his Dairy Messiah, his white cap a veritable crown of thorns.

He paused. A life for a life. A noble sacrifice, or at least a cool story to tell his friends. He raised his beer.

The Blood of Christ, he thought. He downed the entire can in a single gulp.

Thy will be done. Amen.



Double Take
Raychil Arndt

How to Eat an Orange

Eight-year-old Billy Fisk sat on the concrete stoop at the entrance of his home, warm in the morning sunlight. The air was thick with humidity, the sort of stickiness that foretold of sweltering mid-July heat to come.

Billy thought of enduring the dampness of his t-shirt against his skin, and the hot, forceful breath that would come of it later. Now he was content to bask in the remaining briskness of the air, away from the noises within the walls.

Billy paused, gazing down at the orange sphere he held in his hands. He wasn't used to eating his orange whole like this in the morning, or sitting alone outside at such an early hour. Things felt different now, altered imperceptibly.

He suddenly longed for individually sliced bits of orange. He thought about waking Mom and begging her to cut it into quarters like she always did, but he decided to let her rest; it had been a difficult night for his parents. Billy pored over this as he dug at the orange rind, looking for some point of entry on its bumpy, glossed surface.

He had never heard his parents fight before. He didn't know what it was over or what had made it occur at that moment, but he was taken by its immediacy. Noise such as that didn't exist in their home, especially not the kind that woke him out of a sound sleep at two a.m.

Slow, deliberate footsteps echoed behind him. Dad announced his entry with a throat-clearing cough, punctuated by the delayed slam of the swinging screen door. He was wearing that shabby bathrobe that became more and more tattered as years passed. Dad stubbornly refused to buy a new one; sentimental value. He liked the idea of holding on to something permanent, even if it was a bathrobe.

"Good morning, pal," Dad interjected. "How ya' doin'?"

Dad's coffee overtook the taste of the air. It reminded Billy of bitterness: stale crackers, sea water, that awful smell when the coffee maker has been left plugged in all day.

"Okay."

"You sleep all right?"

"Yeah."

Billy enjoyed keeping his exchanges with Dad monosyllabic. It was the best way to keep Dad from getting philosophical.

"Have you eaten?"

"No."

"Are you hungry?"

"No."

"Well, you could have fooled me with the way you're tearing at that thing."

Their pattern of interaction never actually passed through Billy's mind as he clawed at the orange. He just thought of how

PAJKA

Dad seemed to talk to him more these days. He was, after all, talking to Mom less and less.

"Careful with that thing, pal. You're gonna get juice all over yourself."

Billy didn't listen. He attacked the citrus fruit with a newfound vengeance, as if out of defiance.

"Here, let me see that."

Dad plucked the orange from Billy's grip. He rotated it around until he found the navel at the polar end.

"You do it like this. First you peel away the rind."

Billy saw past the orange at the man who began to take it apart. He felt that somewhere upstairs, Mom was probably sitting up staring at the wall, her throat still hoarse from the previous night.

"You should know how to do this. Who knows? Someday you might be stranded on a desert island with nothing to eat but oranges. What will you do then?"

Dad was a master of definition and categories. He taught Biology at a local college. He never failed to put a humorous slant on things, somehow turning them into thinly veiled parodies of themselves.

"This is called the navel here. That's another way of saying 'belly button.' It's like the orange's belly button, and it lets you peel off the rind."

Billy hated it when Dad went into needless detail. He didn't need to be told what a navel was or what purpose it served. He dreaded the impending explanation of the previous night; it was sure to be rose-colored.

"Once you've peeled away the rind, you're ready to take apart the organism itself, or rather, the orange's tasty parts."

Billy suddenly thought back to the spaces in his house. He remembered the silence of dinners eaten without words. The blank expression his mother wore when she picked him up from school. That day when she hugged him and cried for no apparent reason. Billy wanted to leave.

He watched as Dad pulled apart the individual segments of fruit; smelled the scent of orange juice mist.

Orange mist brought him back to the scent of disintegration. He saw his house as an organism separate from all else around it, ripening and deteriorating in the open sun.

PAJKA

"And there you go," Dad said, "ready to eat. Now you can do them all by yourself."

Billy would have liked the orange better if Mom had prepared it for him, but what else could he do?

Billy mumbled a sound of acknowledgement as he gnawed on the soft portions of orange. His dad noted all the tiny cell structures in each slice, and watched as they disappeared between Billy's teeth, popping and noshing between eight-year-old incisors.

Dad looked away while he composed himself. There was no easy way to explain marital strife to his son. He sipped his coffee before making the attempt.

"Your mom and I love you, Billy. Very much."

Billy ate his orange.

"And we love each other. I'm sorry you overheard that. We thought you were asleep."

Billy gagged on rind slightly as he saw himself standing on the steps, stone still, watching their argument unfold.

"It's just that adults complicate things. We make them harder than they have to be."

Billy knew what "complicate" meant. He spit out a seed.

"I want it to be better just as much as you do. And it will be."

Billy ate faster. He never craved orange more.

"I'm promising you now. I'll make it better, I love you too much not to. Okay?"

"Okay," Billy mouthed. By now he was on the second-to-last wedge. He had inhaled the orange.

"I love you, pal," Dad said as he got to his feet. "It's gonna be all right."

"Okay."

Billy felt Dad's rough palms playfully muss his hair. The screen door did its pressurized slam dance against the door frame. Billy felt the breeze it created and allowed it to cool the sweat on his back. He stared down at the last remaining orange wedge.

Billy gathered up the remnants of his orange into the napkin Dad had left for him. Through the cellular wall of the wedge, Billy could make out the form of an entrapped seed. It laid there like an imprisoned life, at Billy's own mercy to be fostered.

Billy devoured the last wedge and glanced at the seed,

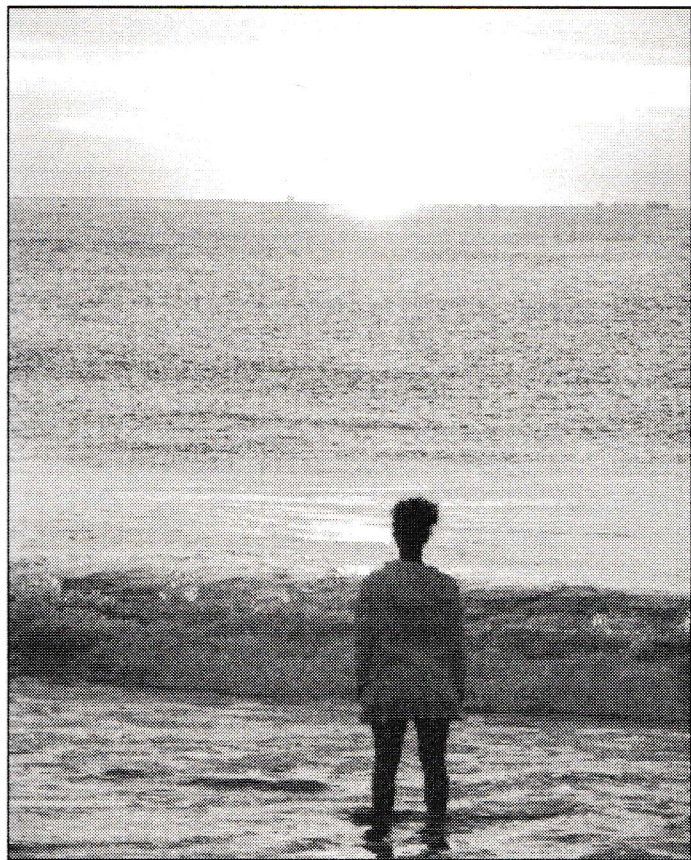
PAJKA

now in his hand, one final time before tossing it upon the wind. Let the seed fall where it would. There was no longer any certainty in the Fisk household. Dad had no categorical divisions for marital unrest or the loss of love. Whether in life or consumption of fruit, Mom and Dad had thrown themselves upon all the old regulations. Orange dissection against the backdrop of uncertainty.

Billy watched the seed disappear into the front yard before walking back into his brightly colored home of definition.

There were no dictionary meanings for divorce, no scientific method to joint custody, and no explanation forty years later for the fruitless orange tree that grew in front of the house for sale no one seemed to want to lease.

EARLY LIBRARY



Sunset
Kathy Dalton

JENNIFER DISKIN

Waking, Alive and Almost Well

The walls are white
in this bedroom where
we attempt our own
separate suicides,
only dull butter knives
to slit us open.

We cut skin
and at least
we didn't bleed heavy
or force our hands
to clean up
the mess we made.

As if anyone would notice,
we finished living.
The only witness
to the undoing,
a Sacred Heart statue
leaning against the mirror
of your mother's dresser.

Our botched attempts
make us crazy but
we wish to be mystics.
You, St. John,
writing canticles
to the bride and bridegroom.
Me, St. Teresa,
sending roses from the sky.
Just two souls scheming
for eternal life,

before broken-
down cars, back rent,
and long morning glances
remind us how
we can't stop breathing.

Monet in the Basement

She thinks how a poet is supposed to be angry.
At least a woman poet, but
She doesn't scream, she doesn't even speak.
She believes in the comfort of repetition.
The litany of everyday living.
Her forty-hour-a-week office job
As comfortable as those elastic stretch jeans,
The 10.99 special, that always fit, or promises to.

Her stomach constricted into pants
That weren't aware
How small a galaxy is when
She forces herself to suck in her skin
and pretend her waist
finds a fourth dimension,
Another new moon or star undiscovered.

She thinks I am getting fat
Because he didn't like the birthday gift.
The Book about the Impressionists
housed in the Hermitage,
Another coffee table present
He flips through, too bad
He doesn't drink coffee, only tea.
Only herbal tea.

She believes he's
tired of the Impressionists.
Giverny's garden.

DISKIN

Monet saw flowers without form.
Splashes of purple and pink,
To her lover, no better
than kindergarten smudges
Dancing along the beige refrigerator.
ready to fall with one slip
of the banana or apple magnet.
Pastel just taunts.
He wants earth tones: brown, green.
The steady growth of trees
and house plants.

She can wish it's Giverny,
The artist's France.
But it's only Wilkes-Barre, present day.
How can she expect him
to know how Impressionists
play with imagined reflections
Using primary colors instead
of drawing from the steadiness
of dirt.

She knows she should be angry.
She believes she should never use
The word should.
A tense that doesn't exist,
at least not yet.
Her heart, a ticker tape,
Printing out negative numbers,
like her checkbook statement,
Minuses.
She can always subtract, $2-1=1$.
Math has nothing to do with Impressionists.

She is a poet, second.
A woman, first.
She will find pretty lipstick shades.
And may find the right pant size.
She can learn to balance
The money she doesn't have

DISKIN

The waist she does have....
There is more than this man.
There are thousands of masculine nouns
for her to find.

A noun and a verb makes a sentence.
But the world needs all parts of speech
to make a complete thought.
She remembers to
bring up last week's laundry
red and blue and yellow
dangling for life in the basement
waiting for light.



Needle On Vinyl
Jim Feeney

NICOLE DePOLO

Waits

The bone bare clip-clop
Over floorboard rhythm stomp
Rasping shadow
Pulls its body's own strings.
Stalking melody noir
Smoked scale of breath seeping
Through every pore in a room electrified
In blue spotlight.
From room to moon together
In a shock lead strain of the divine
Through grit and scrape and howl
And clap hands, tri-chord, boondoggle,
Raincrow compression.

As I dream of glass shattering...

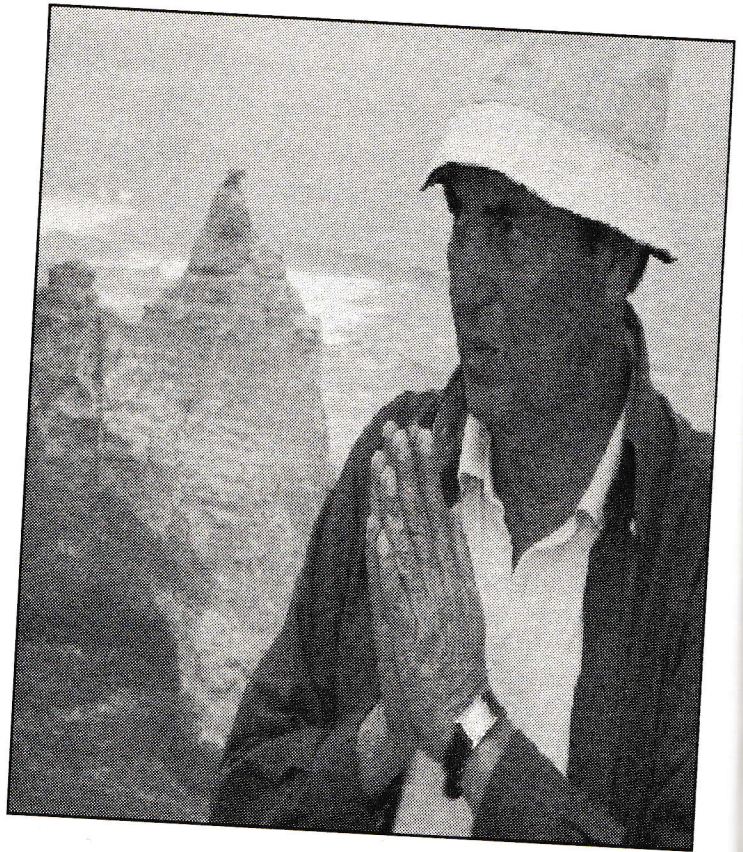
It has never struck me 'til now how prevalent it is;
The first thing I look through to reveal sun or fog, rain or haze,
Each morning before I put it to my lips,
Cupping my liquid nourishment,
Focusing my eyes in frames of steel,
In frames of steel enfolding me
As I am transported on electric wire,
Pane by pane through streets,
In and out of plated doors, swinging and revolving
Under lampworked titles of neon.

Hors d'oeuvres sit uneaten,
The scent of spice pumpkin soup congealing cold
Combines in the steam of your Hot Toddy and my Earl Grey,
And we flush in a bergamot, brandy haze,
Touching honey glazed fingers to our lips
In amazement of having had the same waking dreams,
While the windows steam with hot jazz
And warm breath intoning recognition,
Drawn in the relief of finding one another,
Polarized in this moment,
After tipping the balance that transformed us into beings
Not of this world.
The bodies moving around us in the streets rebounding
At the shock of our charge,
At the intensity of our eyes turned toward possibilities
Foretold in revelations,
And celestial beings that would change the direction of our
planetary course.

The memory of it combines molten in the crucible of your skull,
Your hair erupting lava tendrils as you gesticulate
Revelations that your mouth seeks to qualify
With pop psychology and lyrical sampling.
You're in your cups,
Insisting it's been three glasses,
Until I remind you that your glass is shaped like a bottle,
The vessel, the focus of your art,

DePOLO

I think, to hold the ashes
When the body's burned fire pure,
After the heart stops
At the shock of lithium and a champagne toast
With flutes reflecting double-edged smiles,
While I try to cram my foot into this slipper I dreamed up
Without taking into account my age.



La Catedral
Arthur Redmond

Heap

Banana peel slick brown bubblegum soul stick
stuck, stuck, stuck,
slime sweating acrid
butter churning, stomach turning,
fruit fly swirls singing,
singing high,
singing sweet turned sour.
compost brown wound tight plastic baggie shreds.
constricted diaper spinning barriers between
waste and soil.
empty cartons filled with sour milk legacies of
kids into car, to school, to work,
to table top TV dinner compartment conversations,
tied shut synch sack green.
shield the eyes,
trashcan neutral gray
lid seals tight with distilled stench.
discreet scraps scraped from matching china plates,
salmon maggot spawn,
asparagus spears blunted against last month's lingerie catalogue,
all neatly hidden away
to spare your nose that indelicate wrinkle.

MATT ZEBROWSKI

Speak

I must have a thousand naked pictures of Lindsay Lohan on my computer. But the thing is none of them are real and I know this because at the time I downloaded most of them she was only like 17 and allowing naked pictures of herself to be taken at that age is illegal but if the pictures are fake as I am positive these are it's totally okay to have them because the Supreme Court decided in *Ashcroft v. The Free Speech Coalition* that it was okay to possess make-believe "child porn" I know because I looked because I was afraid. As if this whole thing with Lindsay Lohan could even be anything like pedophilia she is probably more of a woman in every single sense of the word at 17 than my ex-wife will ever be in a lifetime or in a hundred lifetimes even because she could never even dream of being so blatantly female.

I look at these pictures every morning when I wake up alone and cold first thing immediately before my shower so I am aroused when I step in under the spigot and can satisfy myself to the memory of her soft body fresh in my mind or at least the memory of her face expertly doctored onto the soft body of another slightly older woman with similar stature and this makes me feel a

ZEBROWSKI

little bit pathetic masturbating to not only a make-believe scenario but using a make-believe representation of the woman in that make-believe scenario as stimulus adding a whole different layer of bullshit to an already completely implausible fantasy. But it is the best I have.

I have always wanted the pretty ones like Lindsay Lohan even as far back as High School where there were cheerleaders I lusted after but none of them even knew my name and it's not like I would have ever had the courage to speak and tell it to them and it's not like they would have asked for it or spoken back if I tried to give it but there they were anyway all legs and ass like angels of God and sometimes at pep rallies and games you could catch a glimpse of their cheerleading underwear under their skirt if they moved the right way. They looked just like regular colored panties but for cheerleading they called it a "lollipop" and I guess it's sort of obvious why or sort of obvious to me at least.

But none of the cheerleaders ever noticed me back. Why would they have and like I said I was always far too timid to speak. Not that Lindsay Lohan has noticed me either obviously but she's famous and she has a pop record out and the cheerleaders weren't famous not that they weren't good looking enough or anything they just never hit it big although they could have maybe and then it would have been men my father's age fantasizing about them and their soft bodies and cutting their pictures out of magazines

ZEBROWSKI

and wondering why in the world someone young enough to be their daughter just seemed so completely and utterly perfect and the women their own age all seemed so completely and utterly flawed. But there was no internet or doctored photographs to help them out in Pop's day so they would have had to rely on their imagination alone and I guess that's one bad thing you could say about the internet that it's certainly taken the creativity out of masturbation.

I wonder if the internet and television have anything to do with it you know with men being less of men than they were years ago when there was nothing but brawn and wood stoves to get you through the winter and things were so cut and dry before everyone questioned their own sexuality. I'm a victim of this myself I'll freely admit it because when my wife and I divorced one of the things that kept running through my mind as I lay in bed alone and cold was what if I'm gay what if that's why this didn't work I mean I have some feminine characteristics I guess just like anyone else sometimes I may lift my pinky just a little when I'm sipping coffee and who the fuck says sipping anyway real men don't sip they drink they gulp and I don't really know how to throw a ball or a punch or chop wood or hunt and then you get to looking at every little goddamn thing you do and wondering if it's some sort of secret sign from your subconscious that you're really a closet fairy.

That's the thing that's so great about Lindsay Lohan

ZEBROWSKI

though she's a white hot streak of boiling unabashed femininity cut and dry in a world where most everyone else is just a point on some sort of spectrum and I can look at her and feel my own manliness reflected in her stark womanliness what little callous and muscle I have magnified as they reflect off of her soft breasts and belly and I realize that I am not gay and that I am not even effete and that I am the direct descendent of those men who had to master the land with their bare hands just to survive and kill bears and leave the house and trudge through snow just to take a shit.

That's why beautiful women are beautiful especially the famous ones not because of anything in themselves really but because of the way that they reflect and refract you so they make you feel beautiful yourself beautiful in the way that you're supposed to be as a man and if you don't know them it's all the better because that way you don't have to hear them speak and no one wants to be personal with a funhouse mirror.

I bet I'm not the only fifty-year-old man who watches MTV for that exact reason so that he feels less like a fifty-year-old man who wakes up alone and cold in the middle of the night and more like a young womanizer who likes his bedchamber cool and brisk and could have his pick from any number of companions if he really wanted one it's just that none of them are good enough for him none of them are worthy of receiving his genes no longer a benchwarmer in the game of natural selection but in a completely

ZEBROWSKI

different league altogether. When I watch MTV I don't pay attention to any of the music or the drama shows or any of that it's more like background noise really while I'm on my computer balancing my checkbook or eating my TV dinner and I watch it in my peripheral vision just to see if Lindsay Lohan comes on and whenever she does it's transcendental and I forget all about bills and work and all the papers that still need to be filled out for the divorce to be finalized because I am one with the onscreen projection of her perfect soft body.

Sometimes as I lie in bed at the end of the day I listen to her album just about from start to finish. It's not that good really or at least I'm not part of the target demographic because it's certainly not something I would normally be listening to but I still find it to be an enjoyable and satisfying experience because it keeps my mind off of the things that I would otherwise be thinking about as I'm trying to fall asleep so I lie there with my headset on in the dark because it is too late for the bright glow of the television or to sit at the computer to look at my picture collection and it keeps me in tune with her until I am too tired to do anything else but take my headphones off and roll over asleep.

In this way I am sterilized from the start of my day until the end of my day and her soft body is my antiseptic that keeps me numb to all of the things in my life that are not soft not soft at all but rather rigid and claustrophobic and completely unbearable

ZEBROWSKI

and she keeps me clean from the touch of all of the death that I feel
and see all around me the death of my marriage and of my identity
and of my feeble masculinity as I grow old and androgynous and
tired dying a series of small deaths along the way until I have
nothing absolutely nothing not even one thing left in me alive. She
stimulates my senses of sight and hearing all throughout the day
making it a little bit easier now that I am cloistered alone and cold
in my bed to ignore that the other three senses the most important
three touch smell and taste are still left unsatisfied and therefore I
drift in and out of sleep with my headphones on feeling somewhat
less incomplete than I would were I dozing off in silence.

KEITH HUBBARD

½

The killer puts his uniform on
not knowing that the
number on the back is a half truth.
The suits have taken the
razor out of his right foot
and now he swings a heel
away from the jukebox
that doesn't have any music
that he can dance to.

The audio/visual club stands
behind the basketball hoop to
watch him cry,
but no one can see
what the knitting needles are really for
while they're standing on the wall.
They're afraid of slipping on that
puddle of come next to the flower pot
that becomes more sterile
as they hide their intentions.

All of the sudden,
they get the itch to go down to the
AV room to
have their way with it
until the cutting room floor is satisfied.

Until the opening credits are
sacrificed to assumption and ease.

I guess I'm supposed to think that
this movie hasn't started yet
so I can get up for
popcorn whenever I want
without feeling like I've missed anything.

HUBBARD

But when the credits criss-cross,
everything feels less like a possibility
and more like someone else's Gemini sales-pitch.

There's no clamp and no cut,

no oil for the hooks.

But despite his dereliction of duty
the projectionist refuses to repent.
He says that sincere apologies can't be
purchased in the western world.
"We don't have to follow the example of
'those people,'" he amplifies while he
swings at all the wrong bags
without any love in his punches.

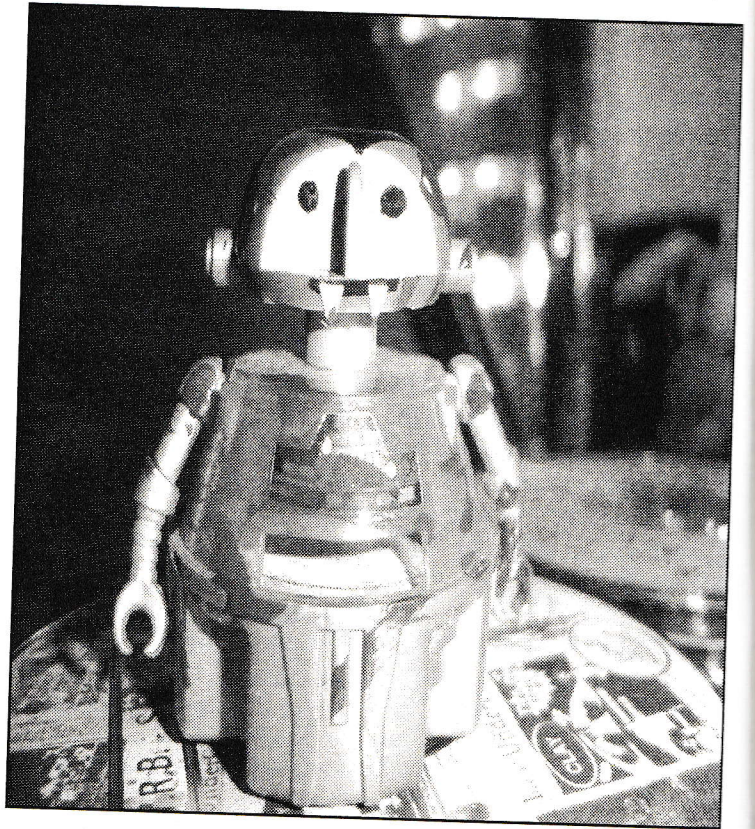
He's making a bargain with nature:
Stillness and repetition for
Murder and procreation.

(pain is a serious business when you read the small print)

Our tongues should be ours to
cut out if we please,
but they stay at the behest of some
abbreviated middle-man
so that we can appreciate not tasting what
his machine can't reel.

But we see through him,

we want our money back.



EARLY COMPANY

Bloody Vampbot
Marissa Phillips

JOYCE CHMIL

My First Cars: A Recipe for Disaster

Step One:

Ingredients:

- March 12, 1982
- 1979 Red Honda Civic (standard)
- Joyce

Directions: Hang out in the Burger King parking lot with friends on March 12, 1982. Stay past curfew. Attempt to rush home. Back Honda into someone else's car. Serve while grounded.

Step Two:

Ingredients:

- March 1, 1983
- 1983 Gold Datsun 310 (automatic)
- Joyce

Directions: Go to class on March 12, 1983. Return home while blasting Aldo Nova's *Fantasy* on car stereo. Swerve to miss rabbit. Drive directly into telephone pole. (Crack pole for added effect and damage.) Serve while hospitalized.

Step Three:

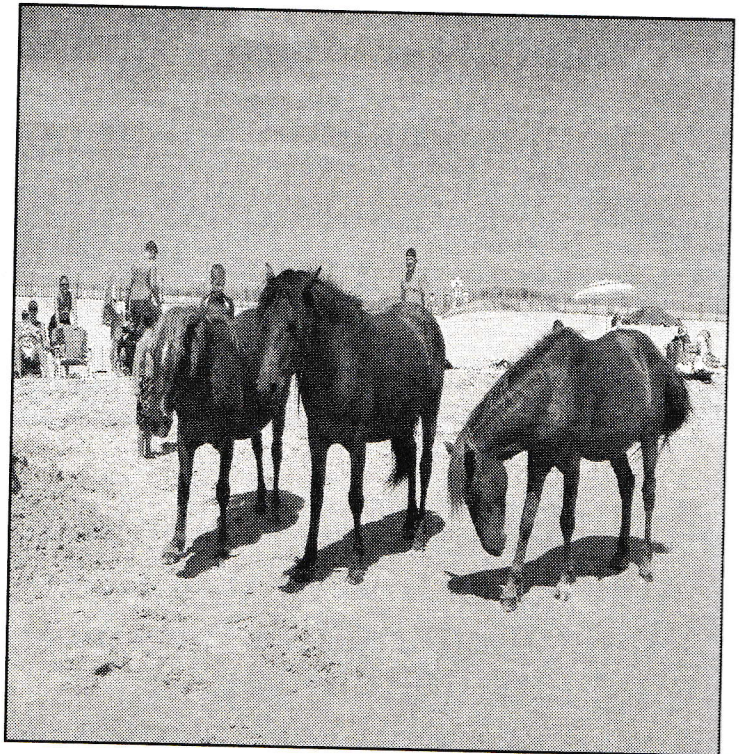
Ingredients:

- March 31, 1984
- 1984 Silver Chevrolet Cavalier (automatic)
- Joyce

CHMIL

Directions: Go to class on March 12, 1983. Park car in assigned space next to red brick building. Return to car to go to a party. Find car garnished with red bricks. Serve while depressed.

Helpful Hint: Beware the rides of March!



*Wild Horses on
Assateague Island*
Clarissa Dudeck

~BIOGRAPHIES~

Some wonder when **Raychil Arndt** is going to disappear, or at least shut the hell up. Her roommate calls her the "bio-Nazi" sometimes because... well... that's a whole 'nother story.

Lauren Carey is a sophomore English major with absolutely zero time on her hands. This is compounded by the fact that she does not wear a watch.

Joyce Chmil is a student in the MA in Creative Writing Program at Wilkes. It is her goal to see how many degrees she can earn at Wilkes before she retires.

Lynda Cook is a non-traditional student at Wilkes. After taking a ten-year hiatus from higher education, she finds herself in her freshman year. She likes to think of herself as dark, mysterious, otherworldly, and poetic; but, in actuality, she simply has an overactive imagination and too much time on her hands. She would like to thank her family in its entirety for simply being themselves.

Kathy Dalton, 18, originally from Neptune, New Jersey, is a freshman communications major at Wilkes. She is on the softball team, a WCLH radio host, and involved in the snowboarding club. She loves the beach and taking photographs.

Michalene Davis is a student at Wilkes. However, she is not actually human, but as her name implies, is really a mouse. M-i-c-k-e-y-d-a-v-i-s. Incidentally, Mickey's family owns a pizza shop in the valley. So if you're having a get-together and need some pizza and some tiny entertainment, you can give Mickey a call; she'll be the little life of the party. But please, lock up your cats first, folks!

Nicole DePolo is an illustrator, graphic designer, journalist and author who has worked with the Seattle Poetry Festival and Northeast Pennsylvania's free entertainment weekly, The Weekender. Currently, she is working on her first novel at Wilkes University's MA Creative Writing program.

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Jenn Diskin is a student in the MA Program of Creative Writing at Wilkes University.

Aleksandra Djordjevic is a graduate student with a passion for all things artistic. On cold days, she enjoys reading old editions of Vogue and catching up on her favorite Audrey Hepburn movies. She comes from a family of artists who have encouraged her to write poetry since she started to at age thirteen. Among her artistic loves are gypsy music, Indian food and dance, Pre-Raphaelite art, and the ocean. She hopes one day to be a famous writer who travels to Italy, on tour for her latest collection of poetry.

Clarissa E. Dudeck, 23, of Hegins, PA, is a 6th-year pharmacy student. Her hobbies include photography, writing, and music. Clarissa enjoys fine gin, kamikazes, fresh cut fries soaked in vinegar, and vintage 80's clothing. Her future plans are to deal drugs, travel, take lots of pictures and have lots of pet dogs. Clarissa would like to thank Manuscript for providing an outlet for student work.

Born in the Himalayan Mountains of Tibet, **Jim Feeney's** real name cannot be written with traditional English characters (although it directly translates to "wise one"). Growing up with monks, Jim became one with the universe and as a young boy he mastered all 73 secret arts of the hidden temple. He soon became enlightened and decided to travel to the faraway land of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, where he would pursue a college education. He's been doing it ever since.

Jennifer Hameza was born and raised in Greenfield Township, PA with my parents Nicholas and LuAnn and my younger sister Emily. I graduated an honors student from Lakeland Jr.-Sr. High School in 2003. Presently, I'm in my junior year as an English major and Secondary Education minor at Wilkes. My greatest aspiration is to have my poetry become known to the world.

Alexandria Holland spends all of her spare mind... time writing and dreaming of what to write. When she isn't doing that, she's staring into the sky and wishing she had a camera. She is currently occupied as a pirate. Anyone interested in the services of a pirate should contact her between the hours of 12 a.m. and 4 a.m.

Keith Hubbard has no time to write a biography as he is sowing seeds of discontent (for Finland).

Amy Kaspriskie is a student at Wilkes University.

Matthew Koch is a graduate of Wilkes University. His many attempts to escape the institution have been unsuccessful, and he is now employed as part of the IT Services team, despite an intense hatred for most computers. He spends his free time drowning his sorrows in many things, of which reading and writing poetry and fiction are the most noteworthy.

Sabrina A. McLaughlin is a Wilkes alumna—a former hanger-about at Kirby Hall. Currently she is a slightly starved and somewhat frazzled graduate student in the English Literature/Creative Writing M.A. Program at Binghamton University (SUNY). Her advice to fellow Wilkes folk who are considering graduate studies in literature is: 1) know what the words ontological, hermeneutic, hegemony, and panopticon mean before you go (or at least be able to pretend you know), 2) remember that not everything (but almost everything) is about sex and capitalism (or anti-capitalism), and 3) consider outpatient psychiatric care because you are barking mad, but you are in good company.

Kacy Muir is a sophomore at Wilkes University majoring in English with a minor in Journalism and Women's Studies. She hails from New Jersey and lives and breathes for music. She hopes to publish many poetry books and novels, and dreams of one day opening her own bookstore.

"Make it a point to appreciate the life you lead. Don't rush the days, you'll wish they stayed for one year later." -TheStartingLine
"If you stand in a circle, you'll always have a back to bite." - Modest Mouse

Stephanie Pacifico is a junior Elementary Education major with a minor in Communications.

Since graduating from Wilkes in May, **Corey Pajka** has been an intern with the Weathervane Repertory Theatre in New Hampshire, and on tour with the National Theatre for Arts and Education

in a bilingual production of Don Quixote de la Mancha. As he writes this from his hotel in Huntsville, Alabama, he knows only two things: his words and his friends. He is thankful for the opportunity to write for Manuscript again. He hopes you like his stories.

Marissa Phillips is an enigma.

Arthur Redmond is a junior International Studies major. He was born and raised in the beautiful Back Mountain. Art is interested in joining the Peace Corps after graduating and perhaps returning to attend graduate school for anthropology.

Jackie Ruanne is a student at Wilkes University.

Hannah Schechter values a banana for being yellow. She finds that rusty spoons understand her and wishes that the world were a bit more like the world John Lennon described in the song "Imagine."

Jason Sutton is not just a 19-year-old sophomore English major, but also the poster boy for masculinity and testosterone incarnate. Though drafted by several lumberjacking companies in Northern Canada, Jason opted to use his brain power to obtain a Secondary Education Certification. He enjoys reading, seeing the moon during the daylight in a clear blue sky, and Vin Diesel.

Heather Werner, 20, is a student at Wilkes. She enjoys photography and, every now and then when she's in the mood, she writes a poem or two. Heather's also a Marine and uses her experiences in the Corps as inspiration. Traveling the world is one of Heather's favorite things to do. She has visited multiple countries on five continents and has no intentions of ever going to Antarctica.

Faith Wydra is a junior biochemistry major with minors in physics, biology, and computer science. She plans to attend grad school after Wilkes. Faith loves outdoor activities and taking pictures. She also just turned 21. ;)

Matt Zebrowski is a student at Wilkes University.

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