



Literary Arts Society

mosaic

Fall 1999

Endless Roads

## **A Brief Word From The President**

### A Note To Our Readers:

As the millenium comes to a close, it is important to realize that while this is a turning point in our lives and in society in general, the road goes on. Our lives are a conflaguration of "Endless Roads", and this magazine has taken snippets from reflections of those lives. I hope you all enjoy these artistic works as much as my staff and I did as we put the MOSAIC together. Best wishes for a happy holiday and a joyous new millenium.

Sincerely,  
James I. Pisano  
President, Literary Arts Society '99-'00.

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BENEATH OUR DROOL  
(A MAGNETIC POEM)  
BY MICHAEL NAJUNAS

WHEN REPULSIVE HONEY HAS TRUDGED THROUGH SUMMER,  
AND MY FOREST SOARS ABOVE WEAK EGGS,  
I WILL MANIPULATE YOUR THOUSAND FEET.

SHIT MAN, HER IRON TV IS ENORMOUS,  
BUT NOT AS PURPLE AS A JUICY BOIL.  
TOGETHER BUT NOT, A WHITEBOY LUSTS.

A COOL MIST ON HER BARE PRODUCE,  
AND WE WITH NO URGE FOR FLUFF.  
THE MOMENT WOULD MOAN IN A STORM OF DEATH.

WE WORSHIP THEIR RUSTY, TIMELY WIND,  
AS ONE ESSENTIAL PEACH SWIMS BY,  
AND FRANTIC WAX COOKS ON THE MOONS SCREAMING LAKE.

THE DIAMOND FIDDLE IS AN UGLY PINK.  
WHY? SMELL THE LOVE AND SEE.  
WHISPER ME FRIEND, I ROCK.

*My Muse*

*By M.C*

*There she lies across the way,  
My Muse, her head nestled on my pillow  
Tired and worn, beautifully born,  
She sleeps and dreams like me*

*I wonder if, like me, she dreamt  
One lonely day long ago  
A love only dared imagined  
Yet found and cherished with her.*

*My thoughts caress the swell of her lips  
And feel the weight of her chest  
As it gently is moved by the rhythm  
Of each life loving breath.*

*As I sit and adore her from above,  
If by chance she dreams of me  
I think myself the most profoundly blest  
Dream I could ever hope to be.*

UNTITLED

BY JULIO A TORRES JR.

TIME IS FOREVER

ALL THE WHILE WE LOOK FOR SOMETHING  
BETTER.

BUT RARELY IS IT FOUND.

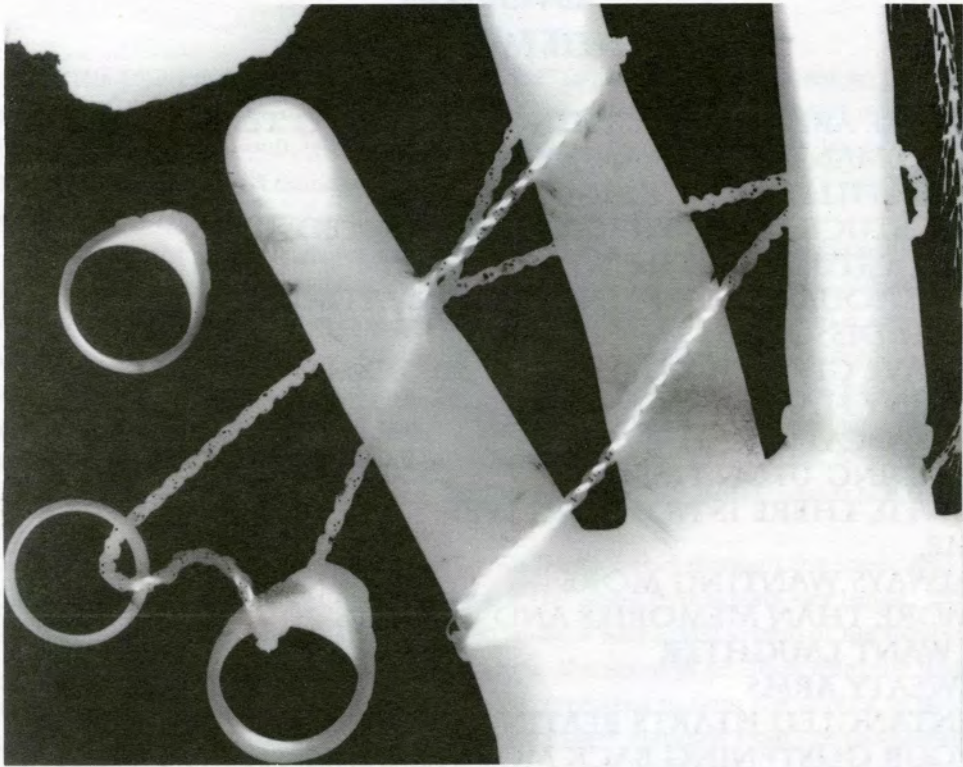
FULL OF POTENTIAL ALL ARE WE.

FULL OF PROMISE AND HOPE.

DOES ANYONE FULLY REACH THERE POTEN-  
TIAL, I ASK THEE.

OR DO WE REALLY JUST COPE?

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By Jennifer Hoffman

**BENZ**  
by SEAN HADCOMBE

(Note: title is an archaic term for gay)

Seeing him  
half naked  
I think  
if I was gay  
he'd scare me straight

OVER YOU  
BY CANEIL MCDONALD

THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS I WANT TO TELL YOU  
TOO MANY WORDS AND EMOTIONS  
TEAR FILLED ADMITTANCE OF LOVE  
ALL STUCK IN MY THROAT LIKE TAINTED AIR  
BUT I STILL BREATHE YOU IN  
FEEL YOUR WEIGHT LINGER ON MY TONGUE  
AND DISSOLVE  
I HAVE GIVEN TOO MUCH OF ME TO LOSE YOU TO  
A TINY FLAME,  
SUFFOCATING  
FEEDING UPON ITSELF  
UNTIL THERE IS NOTHING LEFT  
ME,  
ALWAYS WANTING MORE  
MORE THAN MEMORIES AND REGRETS  
I WANT LAUGHTER  
SWEATY ARMS  
ENTANGLED HEARTS BEATING  
YOUR GLISTENING BACK MOVING BENEATH MY FINGER TIPS  
LEGS, LIPS, AND CHEST  
PRESSED TOGETHER LIKE REUNITED LOVERS  
CLOSER AND CLOSER UNTIL I FORGET WHERE I BEGIN  
I WANT EVERYTHING  
I LONG TO CALL YOU MINE AGAIN  
AND HOLD YOU LIKE NOTHING HAS CHANGED  
BUT EVERYTHING HAS  
AND YOU'RE STILL GONE

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**Emily's Burden****By Scott Randall Thompson**

"His Opinion of You After First-Time Sex" is an article mentioned on the cover of one of a thousand women's magazines to her immediate left. She doesn't understand, and perhaps she never will. She smiles nonetheless, to pedestrians in khakis, bright yellow taxis, and leashed canines heeding an urgent call whose primary focus isn't her. She takes all of it, all of the Earth, into her.

The bright yellow leaf, for example, on the tree that autumn – she sat under that tree for hours, lying on her back, watching the colors catch the sun. The leaf fell into her eye, into her retina, and moved along her neural pathways until it was imprinted like a nuclear holocaust silhouette of a man eternally captured inside her forehead. And her pupils dilated, and caught fire momentarily, and she had a profound understanding of the joy of this world. Meanwhile, pedestrians jogged past and complained about 401k plans, dental bills, and the esoteric nature that becomes a modern life. Emily hears none of them, and in her own little world, which is ours, her mind is constantly at play.

This autumn, however, the wind blows frostbit cold through the trees, and she embraces the fragrance of wet leaves, cloaking the smog that infests her lungs. The unseen vendor peddling bratwurst, trying to make a sale... the aroma of his product a better advertisement than his vaudevillian ploys; the scent of bouillon from the distant soup kitchen feeding an impoverished, ignored, forgotten nation; the rubber of tires from a traveler whose patience was as lengthy as their distance from the gas pedal; the perfume of the decomposing earth which will consume, yes, even you one day. These things and more enter Emily, and she closes her eyes to the world and takes it in through her nose, feeling for each leaf, each homeless man, every indentured vendor, every impatient traveler who thinks they can race time and win.

Emily opens her eyes and sees the world anew, every crack in the pavement, each hue on the tree, every glistening oil puddle rainbow... the world opens itself up to her and she returns the favor. She soaks the air into the lungs, so deep that she's almost a floating water balloon on the river, so similar in nature to her surroundings that she almost becomes them, with only her thin shell to keep her from a natural osmosis into oblivion.

Reality draws her back in the form of Rice Krispies in milk sounding off through a distant microphone... she opens her eyes and looks around her. A lone sparrow in the grass breaking the palsied twigs, who break like lepers and are spread about. The sparrow flies up into the arch of a nearby tree, resting at the base of the V. Emily looked but saw no nest, no permanent resting place, just a brief home. Winter was

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coming, and this creature had decided to brave it alone instead of leaving with south-bound aerial friends for a better life. What could make this creature stay? And yet, perched in the V like a child in the womb, absorbing the rays of the sun, she thought that the bird was finally home. An engine backfires in the nearby road, and the sparrow flies away unwillingly towards the sun. She follows the bird, twirling, circling... sometimes in control and sometimes thrown on a whim by the indifferent air, but always towards the sun. Emily stared at the bird that day for as long as she could, until the light became too much and she began to see spots. Even then, she saw dozens of sun remnants, each containing a bird, circling, circling...

"And our Lord, Jesus Christ, shall save" are the words she ignores. The sparkle on the stained glass Virgin Mary leaves a gleam in her eye which blocks out the apocalyptic talk and what some might consider hypocrisy. None of that here. Mary's light becomes Emily's burden, and her mind defragments the irony of Purity in stained glass form. The light overshadows the darkness, but she absorbs the atmosphere – the homeless man on the steps of the church who wasn't invited in; the gold cross around the priest's neck; parents telling their children to "shut up, for Christ's sake" (this she really doesn't understand.. will the son of God really return if only the five-year old would be silent?); the plume of voices singing songs they don't really believe, but oh! the choir! the heavenly choir that reminds the congregation that even singing praise of the Lord is a competition. Now the light begins to radiate and twirl, and the sparkle of Mary beams into a part of Emily that she never knew existed, and in that moment of hope, revelation, and unadulterated joy, a tear of happiness falls on the mysterious Hymnal.

They must think that she is hungry, because they invite Emily up for a light snack of wafers and wine, which she readily accepts, and the Light follows her steps along the Church like a shadow's better half, and Emily felt a warmth and a peace and a joy that philosophers or hedonists would feign aspire to understand, much less experience for themselves because their hearts would not be big enough, their essence shattering into a million pieces through the universe with all the warmth inside of this child.

After her snack, she returns to her seat, a moderately comfortable red cushioned pew near the back of the Church. A man with a golden cross around his neck who looks like a speaker at a college graduation begins to lecture to the audience about virtue, honesty, and overcoming sin. Emily drifts, caught in the undertow of the Light, staring into Mary's heart in the picture where the Light originated. Emily looked away from the light, and everywhere she saw sun remnants of the Heart of Mary, with her sparrow circling, circling, slowly fading out of view but reaching higher and higher until

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it became a part of the Light, and the Light she saw grew brighter as a result... but so did the Light that was now inside of her.

—And He loved us so much that He sent His... far over her head these words which seemed so distant from her known experience. Scanning the room, Emily searches for someone, anyone, attentive to what she was now receiving... the man checking his watch every two minutes? The woman fighting off sleep three rows ahead of her, and there her head bobs again, lacking the divine inspiration to fight off sleep? The drunk, who she couldn't really see but made himself better known that the Holy Spirit in an odious manner? — Your ministry is to help the impoverished, to give back to the community, to reinvest yourself in their stead...

She wondered how these people could help anyone, so distant and disinterested in what this lecturer was saying. Was that man's watch broken? He would need a new one before he could help the impoverished. Sleeping lady needed a pillow or some Valium or something before she could help anyone. And that foul drunkard, isn't he the type of person who could use their help? Emily was confused by this.. who would help him? He had been here as long as she can remember, and he doesn't seem to be any less drunk for all the time invested these Sunday mornings.

And then, just as sadness was setting in, she saw the Light of Mary shine down upon a six year old child near the back of the room. The child was hunched over in the pew, propping a book against his knee on drawing... well? What would he be drawing? The lecturer finished, — And thus, go forth into the world (or some such thing) and she went to see the boy, smiling, freckled, parted hair Sunday perfect but becoming less and less so with each fidgeting minute. She furled her brow, puzzled, looking at his semi-toothed grin while his focus on her remained constant, and she approached him. He said nothing... rather, he handed her his program. He had drawn a sunflower bigger than the world, which was next to it, and she was sitting on one of the pedals looking over the Universe, a multitude of stars receiving her light and sharing their light with her. And she looked down upon the Earth, and the Earth looked up to her, and her shadow caused a solar eclipse in India, and nocturnal animals came out in China, and the warring factions in South Africa lay down their arms to behold her glory, all in shadow but not in darkness, for the warmth of Emily showered the Earth with love and hope, and for the second time man didn't feel alone, and — Timothy, keep your program, don't give it to this nice young lady (how do you do?) we need to get you off to Sunday School say good-bye to the nice girl...

Sunday school? When did resting on the seventh day exclude children... and the child was carried away on the shoulder of his mother, and Timothy smiled, and the Light of Mary followed the freckled-face boy who, alternating cupped and uncupped his hand. And the Light traced him, a carbon-copy of his essence, and the shine filled the

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come and appropriate gift for a girl on a Sunday morning. And the Light shone on the parchment like it was the lost gospel, and Emily picked it up... sitting on her petal throne, she again soaked in the vastness of her kingdom, and the world was a better place.

"Prozac Can Help" screams the newspaper, attempting to distinguish itself from the multitude of advertisements. Emily is staring at the sky again, trying to find solace in the clouds—is that a pig? Mickey Mouse? Something stands out... a faint cirrus heart, thousands of feet in the air which tells her that something out there cares about her, about all of us. A 747 tailing a banner that says "Where Do You Want to Go Today?" breaks up the heart, and the love wisps away from the sky. Emily doesn't want to go anywhere, perfectly content with her present location. Why do people want to be more, do more, keep moving, never being satisfied with their present location? In the distance, the light of Mary breaks through the clouds over the cancer-clustered neighborhood near the abandoned nuclear power plant.

Emily follows the light to bald children her age, playing and laughing in the street without an obvious care in the world, save nail-biting mothers on porches that seem just a little too concerned. Emily jumps into the double-dutch, the rope going faster and faster, children giggling, the tribal rhythm of feet attempting not to fall... can you hear that? Whoosh — the 747 is the ropes, twin engines blazing, and the engine sputters every time it bleats the asphalt. The plane catches her sneaker and she plummets out of the sky, and streaks of red slunk down her kneecap. Breaking up the sky are the bald-headed boys and girls laughing, smiling, giggling — their angelic eyebrows arched in glee, their foreheads creased in laughter, she soaks this in as readily as the asphalt takes her blood. This kinship, this merry few... she stands up and takes the ropes.

"Hello, operator, please give me number nine"... but the mothers come to take their children away from the pigtailed girl, hurry along now, get on home, if you were my daughter, my precious, healthy daughter, you'd never get away from me (but oh dear I love my son just the same) oh I don't know why I'm telling you this I just can't take it anymore, what have I done to deserve (sob) this (sniffle) I (excuse me) what did he (sob) do, he was so (my Lord!) is so young, you'll pray for him (sniffle) won't you? (moan) you seem very nice (sniffle) he's very nice (honk!) too but the Lord (sniffle) doesn't (moan) answer maybe you'll be better, you blessed, fortunate girl and I, accursed, and my son, and my son... forlorned unaware by some thing, some other force beyond man's power, but it's cold and you should be getting along, dear... oh my, rainbow barrettes, my God, barrettes, they would look so pretty in my daughter's hair, but oh dear...

As the woman ran her fingers through Emily's hair, Emily felt her loss, the loss of generations that will never be, the world history that was this woman's heritage... ending with each treatment, and the hope that withers like a violet near the first frost of the season, weeping, longing, cursing the sky who brought it life.

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*This Love*  
By Caneil McDonald

*I don't want to use you  
But I've been taking what I need  
And leaving you with nothing  
I've been mending myself in your shadow  
Healing my heart while you protect me from  
reality,  
the coldness of alone  
I've let you warm me and caress away my tears  
I've found myself again  
In the me that you see,  
In the person you want as your own  
So I cling to you,  
unwilling to miss out on the goodness that flows  
there  
happy just to be desired  
playing the role of a person who loves you  
your princess  
your prize  
a beautiful liar  
waiting to break your heart*

Untitled  
By Julio A Torres Jr.

*Love is this  
in Red is true bliss.*

*A moment I wait  
to receive thy kiss.*

*As time flashes by  
you grow quickly on thy list.*

*Green is the backdrop  
success my only wish.*

*As torrid pace heightens  
love is this.*

*"Strength"*

By Heather Oehme

Hope's light shines within  
 and glows inside one's heart-  
 binding people with its strength  
 no matter how far apart.

Each day holds hope anew  
 and joys that were before unknown...  
 These joys come from love and faith  
 for comfort can't be found alone.

Hope brings light into the dark,  
 relieving fear in the midnight hour-  
 it's the saving grace for the uncertain  
 for even they believe in its power.

To pass the candle of hope  
 is to keep it burning forever,  
 bringing joy to the lives of many-  
 a gift that no one can measure.

## Night Together

By Richard Lyszczek

First night of the frightened future,  
 what debts owed to passion relentless.

Though thoughts sink my soul,  
 while lives are lifted through brightened eyes.  
 Empty their questions forced upon answers.

Opposed love forbids whose mistakes made,  
 have captured that which,  
 was sought and caressed by friend  
 prevented message closed and wordless.

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## Cupid's Night Off

By Erica DeTraglia (Thanks to Nayra Pumar)

Donavon King and Kayla Vitto meet in college. She thought he was so cute with that devilish smile of his and those deep brown eyes. He thought she was the most beautiful woman in the world. Cupid had shot them both with his arrows. They were married right out of college and lived a very normal life until one night.

"Donavon. Aren't you going home yet?" called his colleague, Davis, from a neighboring cubicle.

Donavon looked up and shook his head, "I've got to finish these papers for tomorrow's meeting or the boss will have my head."

Davis smiled and nodded with sympathy. "Well, buddy..I'm going home."

"Night," called Donavon without ever looking up. A few hours later, he stretched and stood up to go home. On his way home he stopped at the local pub, *Gratty's*. The decor was similar to an Irish pub with dark oak booths, dim lights, and a thick cloud of smoke that seemed to be stuck to the ceiling. Donavon put down his briefcase and sat on a stool running on hand through his brown hair, "Bartender, gin and tonic, please."

"Donavon!"

Donavon turned to see Davis, drunk as mule, waddling over to him, "I thought you would never leave that office. Come sit with us." Donavon got his drink and walked over to Davis' table, which had at least three young woman waving seductively at him. Against his better judgment, Donavon sat down and began to chat with Davis and his companions. Little did he know that a young man no older than twenty was watching him from the bar. The man's black hair had a blue tint to it and his eyes sparkled with a supernatural light. He took a shot of vodka and shook his head, "Donavon my boy... what are you doing? Of course, always on my night off."

Kayla had known that Donavon was working late but she always worried about him. He was working so hard to get a promotion at the office that sometimes he forgot that there was life after work. She tried not to fall asleep until he came home, but that lasted about twenty minutes.

Nearly at dawn Kayla heard a soft bump on the bedroom's door and a whispered curse. She got up quickly and opened it abruptly. Donavon fell to the ground, surprised. His tie was gone and his shirt was half-unbuttoned.

"Hi, sweetie," he said with a shaky voice, trying to incorporate.

"Where were you?" she asked, kneeling by his side. "Oh, Don, you're drunk!" exclaimed Kayla, as she noticed the alcohol smell in his breath.

He started to chuckle without control. With a clumsy motion he tried to hug her, failing. Kayla noticed a red-purple spot in his shirt collar. It was lipstick. No, there were TWO kisses on his shirt collar, each one of a different color.

"Don, where have you been?" Kayla asked, grabbing his shirt's collar, "and what's this?"

"Huh?" he bowed his head, trying to look at what she was pointing, "What?" I... see nothing..."

"Hey!" she took his hand, "Where's your wedding ring?"

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"What? My what?" he approached the finger where the ring should be to his eyes, squinting. "Sheesh. I swear to you that it was there when I arrived to the bar... suuuure... darling." He sat and started to dig into his pockets with awkward movements. "Wow, my head. Why is this room spinning? Or it's me?"

When he started to dig into his pockets Kayla saw that his belt was also missing. Without a single word she slapped him on the face and ran out of the room and into the guestroom locking her in.

Donavon took his shirt off and looked at the lipstick-stained collar, "Ahh damn." He rubbed his cheek where Kayla had hit him. He got up and stormed to the window where he placed his hands on the window.

"Donavon King, you're such an jerk." His breath quickened with anger as his nails scratched the glass. He stopped and grabbed his pants when he realized that he didn't have a belt on. His head hurt. "What did I do?"

He walked slowly down the hallway and stopped at the guest room door. He wanted to knock and say he was sorry but he knew she wouldn't listen now. His heart hurt so much and he knew that Kayla felt the same. He decided to leave her alone for awhile so she could cool down. So, he walked to the living room to sleep on the couch. As he closed his eyes he remembered something. Sitting up, he reached into his pocket and took out his wedding ring. He slipped it on, clenched his fists, and cried himself to sleep.

Kayla walked slowly into the bedroom expecting Donavon to be there but he wasn't. She crawled into bed and lay on his side and buried her head in his pillow, crying herself to sleep.

Unknown to Donavon and Kayla but someone had watched both of them. He ran his hand through his black hair, letting out a long sigh. A pair of white feathered wings slowly emerged from his back as he flexed them to their full span. "Now how am I going to fix this?" The man scratched his chin as a big grin crossed his lips.

The next day, Donavon was working at the computer in silence, that morning his mind was either getting over his hangover or trying to remember last night. The telephone rang, making Donavon clench his jaw in pain. He wondered what Kayla was doing.

Kayla talking very severely to the building's maintenance crew. Kayla was so mad about everything: Don, their marriage, and now her computer was crashing. She felt betrayed. She gave it a hard thump with her fists, but nothing happened. With a furious groan she once again listened to the elevator music on the phone, which she had been listening to for the past five minutes. Maddier than before she slammed the phone down. She stomped to the door to her office and opened it.

"Carl, I'm going to...- she saw a young man with khakis and a tight black shirt on in front of her. Is black hair shown blue under the lights and he was wearing a wide smile on his face.

"Not Carl. I invite you lunch" he said, and without allowing her answer, he touched her on the shoulder and both disappeared from the office, sitting in a small cafe.

"What the hell are you doing?!" she asked, looking around.

"What? Not hungry? Please, all will be explained. I just want you to be comfort-

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able."

"What do you want from me?" she asked fearfully.

"You know to talk... chat... I rarely get to do that with my job." He took her glass and a bottle of wine that appeared out of nowhere and began to fill it. "Be careful, it may be a little bitter at first."

Kayla sniffled the wine then tasted it.

"Do you like it?" asked the man, placing the napkin over his lap.

"It's fine." She put down the glass. "You haven't answered my question."

"I'm sorry for what happened last night, it was all my fault..."

Kayla was a little taken aback. What about last night? Who was this guy? "What?" The man put his arms up in defense, "I saw Don getting drunk and I knew I should have intervened but it was my night off."

"Night off? What? Who are you?"

The man leaned over the table, so close Kayla felt his breath upon her face, "I'm that pleasant sting you felt the first time you kissed Donavon. My name is Cupid, Bringer of Love."

Kayla looked at the man in front of her. He was completely serious, "And that's how we just appeared here...you used magic?"

He nodded. Kayla whimpered and grabbed the wine bottle, filling her glass up all the way.

"So he DID cheat on me! Well you blew it, didn't you?"

Cupid put his finger to his lips, "Shhh. I didn't say that. I just said he got a little too drunk and let his guard down."

"So he didn't cheat on me?" Kayla said with a smile, but Cupid shrugged, "I didn't say that either."

Kayla frowned, surprised. "I'm confused." Cupid smiled as a waitress came over with a tray. She placed a bowl of soup in front of Cupid and raviolis in front of Kayla. She was about to protest when Cupid said, "I know it's your favorite. Eat up." Kayla did dig in. She had not realized she hadn't eaten since last night. When she finished a bite she looked at the man in front of her.

"SO, why did you bring me here again?"

"Well, one is to apologize, which I did. Second, I wanted to tell you that, you see Don's love is real. He loves you so much he can't see where his soul ends and where yours begin. Because your souls are melted by your love that I have provided, of course. So, don't worry about last night. But if you still don't like the idea of him "cheating on you," you can comfort yourself thinking you could also "cheat on him" as easily as he could do.

"Never," affirmed Kayla, picking her glass and tossing back the wine with great determination.

"Sure," thought Cupid, smiling. She hadn't noticed the spell he cast over her wine. He only needed a few minutes to have it working on her...

Kayla felt like she was in heaven, she could feel the warm evening sun caressing her back, laying on bed tangled in warm sheets. She rubbed her chin against the pillow, hugging it closer to her and opened the eyes...

The first thing she saw were her clothes thrown on the wood floor, and the second was that it wasn't her bedroom. She incorporated on a jump, wrapping herself with the sheet. Where was she?

Cupid.

Kayla's eyes opened wide as reality hit her all too quickly. What had happened? She could see a man's pair of khakis with her clothes on the floor.

"Morning!" Cupid entered grinning with white-feathered wings extending from his back. "You looked so tired that I left you sleeping after we..."

"We, what?" interrupted Kayla, "What had happened here... with us?" She didn't want to believe what she was thinking.

"Let's see, shall we," he said as he picked up a pair of stockings, "We have a woman, a man, their clothes on the floor, a jumbled bed and a empty wine bottle beside it... what could it mean? I can't imagine. He looked at her as if she were stupid, sitting on the bed; it was obvious.

Kayla moaned, falling on her knees, her face buried on her hands.

"How could you?" She wanted to strangle him with her bare hands and watch him dying from lack of air.

"Sorry, dear, I'm immortal," he smiled, reading her mind. Cupid picked up her bra under a pillow and waved it in front of her face.

Kayla tried to snatch it from him but he levitated out of her reach, chuckling.

"This is NOT funny..." she snarled, picking the empty bottle with the intention of hurling it at him.

"Look out! Your sheet is slipping down," he forewarned her, distracting her. Kayla felt a hustle and found herself trapped on the bed under the winged jerk. He tickled her nose with a white feather he plucked from his wings, making Kayla snort.

"Sorry dear, I win," he placed the feather in her hair.

"Release me!" she cried.

"Trust him. He loves you very much. And I can vouch for that," he chuckled, "but if you must know, he didn't cheat on you. Now, wake up."

Startled, Kayla opened her eyes. She was in her office, leaning over her desk. A quick look at the wall clock told her that she had been asleep, or whatever she had been, for half an hour.

She rubbed her head dazed and confused. Her computer was still crashing, but that didn't matter now. She got up and started to walk to the door. On the way, something floated by her. It was a white feather. Kayla smiled and plucked it out of the air. She ran out of the office and got the first taxi to Donavon's office.

He was there, so absorbed reading a inventory sheet, that he didn't notice her arrival. Better. Kayla hugged him from behind.

"Forgive me, sweetheart," she whispered, kissing him on the neck.

"What?" he turned, a hopeful smile on his face.

"Yesterday I got mad and I didn't let you explain to me what happened. I didn't trust you... forgive me."

"I thought it was me who should have said something..." he frowned, feigning confusion.

They embraced each other and shared a passionate kiss, not caring who saw them.

Cupid, disguised as a mail carrier, looked into the office and smiled. "I need a night off."

---



The Grove By James Pisano

### **The Reversion of Silence** **By Heather Suydam**

Laryngitis is a symptom of the apathy  
that breeds and procreates in our society  
The open mouths can speak only long  
enough  
to offer some form of something which  
inconveniences that individual  
But whose loud boisterous protests  
die in the face of adversity  
leaving only silent lips  
when the voices are essential  
And it is with awkward silence  
that we as a nation face each tomorrow  
with fewer answers  
for the growing questions and problems  
But with greater number of grievances  
to accompany those questions and problems  
It is no longer a question  
of the violation of the individual's rights  
but rather the individual's violation  
of the sanctity of human life  
and the lack of dignity in each person's life  
Morality has taken a backseat and  
reckless FUN is driving us down the freeway  
very quickly around the hairpin turn ahead  
and straight over the cliff of decency  
into the dilapidated depths of the world  
we've created for ourselves  
Those who recognize the potential danger  
the impending impugning of inane behavior  
are often passed by in a blur in the race  
to find the B.B.D. Bigger Better Deal  
the opportunity that will be  
high (personal) yield and  
low (altruistically speaking) maintenance  
And in this glaring painful silence  
the crash of the car on the face of reality

will erupt like a thousand volcanoes  
spewing forth the wretchedness  
which we have allowed to become the norm  
Even the screams from broken homes  
cannot break the silence that has  
fallen on mankind  
not the gunshots from children's guns  
nor the screams of their victims  
This thick heavy quiet can only be inter-  
rupted  
by the masses imploring God to forgive them  
as He has done before  
and although there will always be those  
who chose not to join in  
those who do have strength enough to  
succeed  
And at that a trumpet will herald  
the turning point in the path of mankind  
from which it will have to dedicate itself  
in order to remain on the same course in time  
Then the silence of  
the millions of victims from the Holocaust  
the silence of  
countless slaves worldwide, past and present  
the silence of  
abused children, parents, people  
will dissolve into mournful wailing  
which will lead to healing  
and ultimately cries of jubilation  
No longer will silence reign  
but praises to God will fill the air  
and the Power that defeated death  
will be seen.

---

## UNTITLED

BY MELINDA O'CALLAGHAN

I STEP AWAY  
JUST FOR A LITTLE WHILE  
TO TRY TO FIND  
SOME PERSPECTIVE.  
I MOVE OUT OF THE ROLE  
I NEVER AGREED TO BE IN,  
BUT I STAYED THERE  
FOR TOO LONG  
AND LOST MY POINT OF VIEW,  
MY SENSE OF REALITY.  
SO, I TAKE A STEP BACK  
AND SHAKE THAT SKIN  
OFF OF ME  
THAT DYING THING  
STRANGLING ME  
CAUSING ME TO SUFFOCATE,  
BECAUSE I CAN'T BREATHE  
WHEN I'M STUCK  
IN THIS PACKAGE,  
ONE I NEVER WANTED,  
BECAUSE THERE IS BEAUTY  
UNDER THAT DEAD SKIN  
AND SO WHAT IF I  
WEAR MY HEART ON MY SLEEVE.  
LET ME BE EXPOSED,  
BECAUSE THAT'S BETTER  
THAN LIVING  
IN THIS PLASTIC SHELL.

Inspiration  
By Rich Carlson

The perfect blend  
of fun and pleasure,  
mixed with a little laughter  
through a serious smile.

Pant suits by day,  
tank tops and sweat pants by night.

Sitting behind a mahogany nameplate  
answering phone lines.  
Sitting at a coffee table  
writing poetry lines.  
Both as important  
Both irresistible.

Silver necklace,  
soft pale skin.  
Beautiful, short blond hair  
framing a beautiful, delicate face.

Screaming for adulthood,  
not letting go of today.  
Wanting a diamond,  
but settling for cubic zirconium.

Perfectly blended.  
Perfectly imperfect.  
I am in love,  
with my inspiration.

*Perpetual Circle*  
By Sarah Dowling

*Across the void of the perpetual circle you sit,  
The intensity in you eyes only pales to the words of profound beauty that you  
make  
come to life with a single breath.*

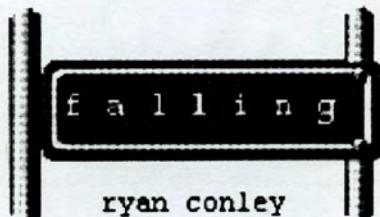
*The urge to speak with you, to just be near you  
Tears a gaping hole in the deepest chambers of my heart.  
But I can't. I can't change even for you  
This superficial mold is one that I cannot force myself to fit.  
Yet I wish for my path to be the one that will lead to your acceptance.  
But truly I know it only leads deeper into the woods.  
I will fate to take me to that pristine lake where my childhood was formed,  
with the hopes that I would find you there.  
To stand by you side and share the sunset that is forever more beautiful than  
the last.  
But this vision of closeness lies just beyond my reach,  
For the price that it carries is much too high  
No matter how much you want me to,  
I cannot be what you want me to be.*

*And I know that I will be stuck across from you in the perpetual circle, never to  
meet  
again,  
Only able to experience the intensity that I miss so much from afar.*



Introversion By  
Scott Neville

---



I was the DJ.  
You sat down.  
We talked.  
They danced.

'We' were now 'Us'  
Days go by.  
We spend them together.  
Happiness at last.

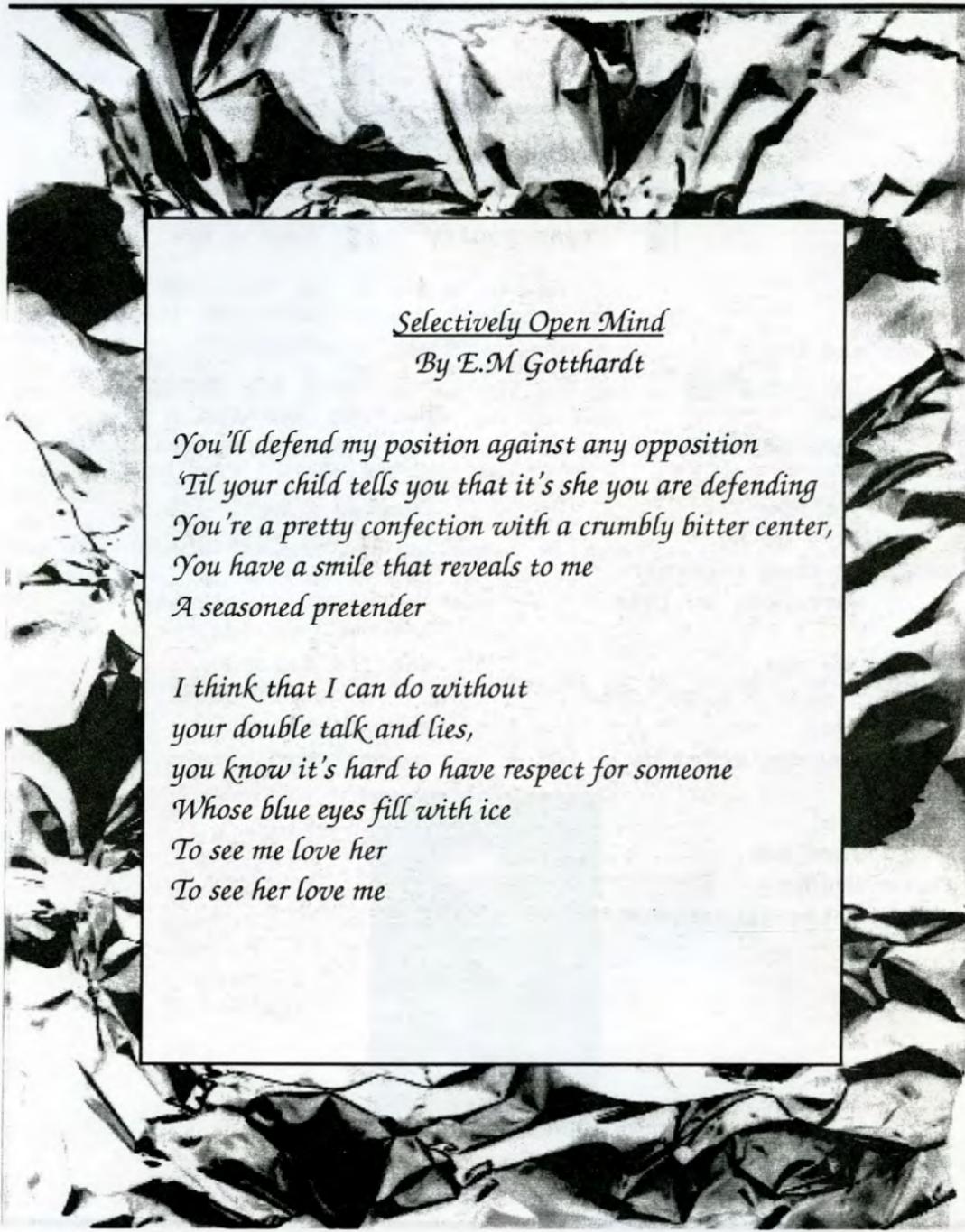
Before we met,  
I made a commitment.  
I must go,  
You can't follow.

One month,  
Then two,  
Three months,  
Three thousand miles.

You come visit  
For the weekend.  
We stay together,  
Happy not being alone.

Tuesday comes,  
You must go.  
We kiss,  
You fly home.

But I'm falling  
Out of love.  
My parachute  
Doesn't open.



Selectively Open Mind

By E.M Gotthardt

*You'll defend my position against any opposition  
'Til your child tells you that it's she you are defending  
You're a pretty confection with a crumbly bitter center,  
You have a smile that reveals to me  
A seasoned pretender*

*I think that I can do without  
your double talk and lies,  
you know it's hard to have respect for someone  
Whose blue eyes fill with ice  
To see me love her  
To see her love me*



By Holly Smith

## Shower of Consciousness

By Scott Neville

Knots slipping away, ugly man at store yelling, ex-husband bellowing, the horn of a truck, the crash of a glass. Why am I here, where am I going? A bird trying miserably to take flight wings broken by a racing car, I'm stuck; I'll go nowhere, the horns blare again, slowly melting ice cubes. The heat radiating from within, the rain of the shower, pouring over all. Safety. The plush carpet of water against my naked body, a slide in the bright sun, knots loosening; letting go of the bridge, falling, floating in a jet stream. A feather stuck in the wind, the water pouring over my body, massaging my back, kneading my head, a fuzzy glow intoxicating me, a glass of alcohol smooth viscosity, glow going down like honey. Sweetness.

The sanctuary of a shower. Thought ceases momentarily.

The tide begins again, brain plugged back in - DC or AC? Back into the stream, floating...

A crash from the other room breaks the serenity.

Cords drawn tight, knives sharpening, a silent figure, raking fingers on any icy blackboard; screeeech. Who's there? Mind screams - Mom, Dad, Killer, body lying on the bottom of the tub. Horrible thoughts, block them out; cracks in the wall, black images oozing through. The swirl of water tinged with blood circling the void of the drain's darkness. Psycho, Norman. Where are you, Norman? Horns in a cacophony, hand at the door; Is it coming for me? The mirrors are fogged, steamed, no one will see the horror - not even me. Just the faceless man, arm with a knife, twinkling, behind the door.

Screech of the hinges, click of the latch; Door's not latched, one point for opposing team. Funny, but *not* at the same time. Falling from its nest an injured bird, no where to hide, middle of nowhere, but can't flee the cat. Gasping for air, air clinging to ceiling, air winning - steer clear of the lungs! Get a grip! Isn't that an Aerosmith title? No where to go - animal in a trap, the scissors laugh from the other side of the fog; A beacon of safety, a lighthouse in the mist, but too far to reach, maybe the ship will pass. Titanic, another tragedy on the record books. One dead, murder; One thousand dead, a statistic.

Sudden blackness, the house lights go down, end of the show already? Spinning sensation of flight, pushing on the edges of plastic lucidity. The showerhead spitting its bounty on my body, knees above, need to be shaved. Am I dead, worrying about my knee hair? Didn't feel the knife, I hope he's happy, void of warmth.

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Hear the rain, need galoshes, sand paper on face, a steady rhythm, rubbing away the skin. Confusion, alcoholic oblivion - where's the white line? Eyes open, gateways to the soul. White wetness, bubbles oozing from nostrils somewhere, submerged but rising to the surface. Pop! Steady pulse of a motorboat, buzzzzzz, buzzzzzz. Eyes focus, foggy depths, world sideways, drone of bees, buzzzzzz, buzzzzzz.

Phrixes, licking at my face and the puddle forming on the bathroom floor - the drain was clogged by my limp body. Sadistic cat - purring at his owner's overactive imagination.

**Run Apocalypse 2000?****Warning: Running this program will delete filename Life As We Know It****OK**

By Chelsey Ferrigno

I Chelsey, your sister, who shares with you in society the tribulation and the modern world and the patient endurance, was in the city called Poughkeepsie on account of it being my current place of residence. I was in a deep sleep, and I heard in my dream a loud voice like a trumpet saying, "Write what you see in an article and send it to the newspapers and to the magazines, so that the people may know what you have seen."

Then I saw the days in which the new millenium shall draw near. I saw in those days an exodus of the cults from the land, and they sold their worldly possessions and went to the high places to make ready for the aliens and for the angels and for their godhead. Then was their fire on the mountaintops and on the hilltops, and the cults made sacrifices and offered up prayers, wearing funny robes and doing psychedelic drugs. And many aliens indeed entered the land at this time, but they sneaked silently across the borders of the land, picking oranges and taking over convenience stores, and those who awaited them saw them not.

In these days also, many people bought up the water of the land, so that the stores ran dry, and a cry of despair went up from the consumers. "What shall we drink when Y2K hits if there is no water?" they cried out. But the stores heard their cries and lo, an angel of the stores appeared to them and brought them forth to the juice aisle, and they were comforted.

I saw, too, long lines at the banks and at the credit unions, though every teller window was open, and many people closed their accounts or withdrew large sums of money, fearing Y2K. And because of the many thousands of people making transactions, the mainframes became overloaded and there sounded a great crash, which echoed throughout the land.

And the people of the land became confused, saying to one another, "How can this be? Surely the Y2K bug has not caused this, for it is not yet time." And the people checked their wristwatches and murmured amongst themselves, some saying that the crash was a government conspiracy, others that it was because the computers were made in Japan, where it had already been midnight still others that it was only the first step in the plan of the Canadians.

And lo, I saw the mainframes fixed rapidly, but the people did not know this, and because of their panic and their heedless actions it came to pass that the banks were closed to them and allowed no transactions, and the people were cast out into the streets.

Now appeared to me the great clock of Times, and when the first day of the first

month in the year of our Lord 2000 arrived, then did it strike twelve times and there was darkness in the land, for it was nighttime, and a great ball like a thousand lights dropped from the sky. Then was their kissing and exchange of embraces.

In the next moment, silence fell upon the earth, followed by a great sound like that of rioters. And the sound was rioters indeed, who had been deceived by false prophets and believed that a bug had ravaged the land, destroying every alarm system, and these rioters fell upon the stores and the houses and the cars of the land like a plague, leaving shattered glass in their wakes and acting in accordance with their wills.

But the alarm systems had not been destroyed as the people thought, and were angered, and they sent up a great clanging and beeping that deafened the city, but this did not stop the rioters. Police officers cried out, saying, "Stop them, oh Lord, for they will surely destroy this city and all that is in it." But the Lord's ears were closed by the roaring of the alarms and of the rioters, and He heard not their cries. And the rioters destroyed the city and all that was in it. They smote the power lines and the gas mains and the Pokemon-selling stores, and nothing was spared, and the land was plunged into the cold and the darkness.

In this time, the inhabitants of the land became panicked, being duly afraid of the dark, and turned to one another saying, "We're all gonna die!" Many teenage boys clung to the girls closest to them and whispered, "You don't want to die a virgin, do you?" And their blood was spilled upon the couches and the back seats of the land.

Seeing the land without power, those with bank accounts and with stocks who had not already hidden their finances under their mattresses were distressed, and among them there was a weeping and a gnashing of teeth. Yet even those who had prepared themselves, hiding their money and their beanie babies, were not spared, for the rioters fell upon them in their turn and took these things from them.

And now I saw, rising up from the north, Canada, being disgusted by the antics of the Americans, and threatening to launch a nuclear attack. The government officials of America were surprised and frightened, and immediately did they go into hiding. Thus did the Western world fall into disarray and come to be left in the fins of pet goldfish, who ruled over all the land. And this lasted for two days and two nights, but on the morning of the third day the goldfish were found to be floating at the tops of their bowls, as befalls all their kind, and seeing that the world had not ended nor had it fallen forever to the rule of the fishes, the people of the land took heart and refrained from further silliness. Water reappeared on store shelves, banks reopened and conducted transactions, and the rioters were given television to watch and were thus quieted.

The government officials ceased to hide and again pretended to rule the land, and power was restored to the hands of those who flush dead goldfish.

I warn every one who hears the words of the prophesy of this article if any one adds to them, God will add to him the title plagiarist, and if any one takes away from the words of the prophesy of this article. God will take away from him his title as editor. He who testifies to these things says, "Surely this insanity is coming soon." Amen. Come, Y2K!

---

Ten Pieces For A Penny  
By Jaime Veley

Not just a day for delivery,  
A day for gossip.  
Men in their handmade clothing,  
Gossip as they load up the pulley.

Up goes sack after sack of flour.

"The harness jus' came unhitched and the carriage flipped."  
"Johnson's barn burned right down to the ground las' night."

Up goes container after container of lard

Not just a day for shopping,  
A day for gossip.  
Women in their hand-sewn muslin dresses,  
Gossip as they choose new material for their son's pants.

Up goes roll after roll of material

"Lucy Jane is gonna have another child runnin' around."  
"The horse jus' went crazy and bit Beth's daughter's hand clear off."

Up goes bag after bag of sugar

Children run straight for the candy bins,  
Ten pieces for a penny.  
Gotta get the round ones; they last longer.  
Hurry, the store is almost out.

Up goes bin after bin of candy

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**a night, a clock and a train**  
**(the transposition of the ordinary and the insane**  
**during the Holocaust)**  
**By Heather Suydam**

a night full of broken shards of glass,  
an attempt to shatter a people.  
a clock wound with terror  
that ticked away the end of millions of lives.  
a train ticket bought with desperate hope  
that led to certain death.

and how courageous, how brave of a bully  
to gather a virtually insurmountable number of soldiers  
to attempt to conquer the innocents,  
the innocence.  
and how naive, how myopic of the world  
to take a dictator at his word rather than at his actions  
the many evils that when effected,  
affected many.  
and how insidious, how putrid of any human beings  
to legislate hatred in many onerous forms,  
that what was once amoral,  
became moral.

and they celebrated it  
parading around their prejudice and hatred.  
flags of patriotism waving on the  
nauseous winds of pride.  
and they lived it  
selling many on their rationales and justifications  
their movies and fliers flooding the  
conscience of a nation, of the world.  
and they killed it  
snuffing out the old view of humanity and its nature.  
scraps of decency still clinging to society on the  
hearts and souls of the truly good.

ultimately they faced defeat.  
ultimately they could not succeed.  
ultimately they had lost at the beginning.  
ultimately they could not gas and burn the Essence of Life.  
ultimately they could not bury the Endurance of the Human Spirit.  
ultimately they could not overcome the Divine and Complete Power of God.

---



By Jennifer Hoffman

THE CLIFFS OF TIME  
JAMES A. ROWELLO

TO BE AWKWARD IN THE FADING LIGHT  
VICTIMS CROSS OVER IN SHADOWY PLIGHT  
MINISTERS AND FOOLS STAND HAND IN HAND  
FOREVER INTERTWINED IN THIS DYING LAND  
REBIRTH I CAST WITH MUCH DESPAIR  
TO SEE THE END REPEAT WITHOUT REPAIR

"CHRISTINA'S WORLD"  
BY E.M. GOTTHARDT

(INSPIRED BY THE PAINTING BY ANDREW WYETH)

SHE LAY IN THE STIFF SHARP GRASS WHERE SHE FELL, HER BODY PROPPED UP BY THIN MUSCULAR ARMS. THEIR BONY ELBOWS SPOKE OF A LIFE LACKING LOTIONS AND CREAMS, HER PINK DRESS WAS FADED AND TORN. IN THE COLORLESS EVENING SKY, BIRDS FELL TO A BARN WINDOW, TAKING SHELTER FROM THE MAW OF NIGHT, WHICH STALKED THROUGH FIELDS OF GRASS, ITS ONE MERCILESS EYE ALREADY OPEN AND ALERT. SHE LAY MOTIONLESS BUT FOR THE STEADY SWELL AND COLLAPSE OF HER CHEST AND THE SWIRL OF DARK BROWN HAIR, WHICH WAS LOOSENED FROM A CAREFUL BUN BY THE NOISELESS BREEZE.

HOW OFTEN SHE HAD RUN HERE, TO A FARM THAT WAS NO LONGER A FARM, WHERE THE SMELL OF PHANTOM COWS HUNG HEAVILY IN THE AIR. SWEATY AND DIRTY, BUT FILLED WITH AN UNEASY CALM, SHE CLIMBED INTO THE LOFT AND SLEPT, SURROUNDED WITH HAY AND BARN MICE, SAFE FROM JUDGING GLANCES, PIERCING SILENCE, AND A MAN WHO WOULD NOT NOTICE THAT SHE WASN'T THERE TO IGNORE.

---

Sitting in the Dark  
By Kimberly S. Genesi

Sitting in the Dark  
Sipping tea  
Drinking in Life  
My Life  
Life of everyone around me  
All these people yet  
I am alone  
Without You beside me  
Sitting in the Dark  
Singing along with words  
I don't know  
Words I didn't write  
Words I've never heard before  
Words I'll never hear again  
They mean nothing  
If they don't come from You  
Sitting in the Dark  
Being quiet  
And just thinking  
How much nicer the Dark seems  
When You're in it with Me



Mill's Boathouse By Scott Neville

Brain Matter Grey

By Donna Jackson

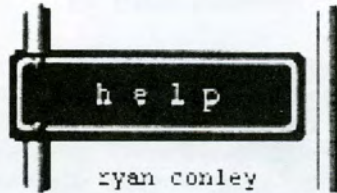
O foolish mortal, wrecked by pain,  
Wretched and writhing in thy wrath  
Against th'injustice of thy fate;  
O how dost thou see justice in  
This bitter end? Thou piteous man,  
Must thou then rage against thine God's  
Eternal hand of Love and Hate  
Which leads thee on thy tortuous path?

How must I gaze upon thy pain  
Yet still my hand against my will  
To save a wretched soul as thee?  
O guilty me, who must still see  
Thy funeral march, thy pyre burn!  
How may I change the beat of fate  
Which leads thy feet upon the path  
Of condemnation and of death?

Thou foolish mortal! Still thy feet  
Against the tempting drums of fate!  
Cast off thy sin and free thy mind  
Of fetters thick. Unbind thy soul  
And free thyself from grips of God  
And man alike. Cast off their hands!  
Thou wretch, must I as well as thee  
Be dragged along your spiral path?

Be gone from me! if choose thou must  
The wedding song of Death and Hell.  
Then go thou must; forsake thy strength,  
Thou sick'ning beast, thou vile worm;  
Cast off thine life, embrace the gun,  
And pull the trigger of thy fate.

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The phone rings - I answer.  
You ask for my help - in tears.

I make an appointment  
For early the next afternoon.

We sit together  
In the cold waiting room.

They call your initials,  
We walk to the exam room.

You clutch my hand  
As the needle draws blood.

She hands you a card  
With a phone number and code.

We go home.

The doorbell rings - I answer.  
You are there - clutching the  
card.

We sit on the couch,  
I dial the number.

Your hands tremble  
As you enter the code.

A voice comes on the line,  
You hold the receiver between  
our ears.

CHLAMYDIA - NEGATIVE  
GONORRHEA - NEGATIVE

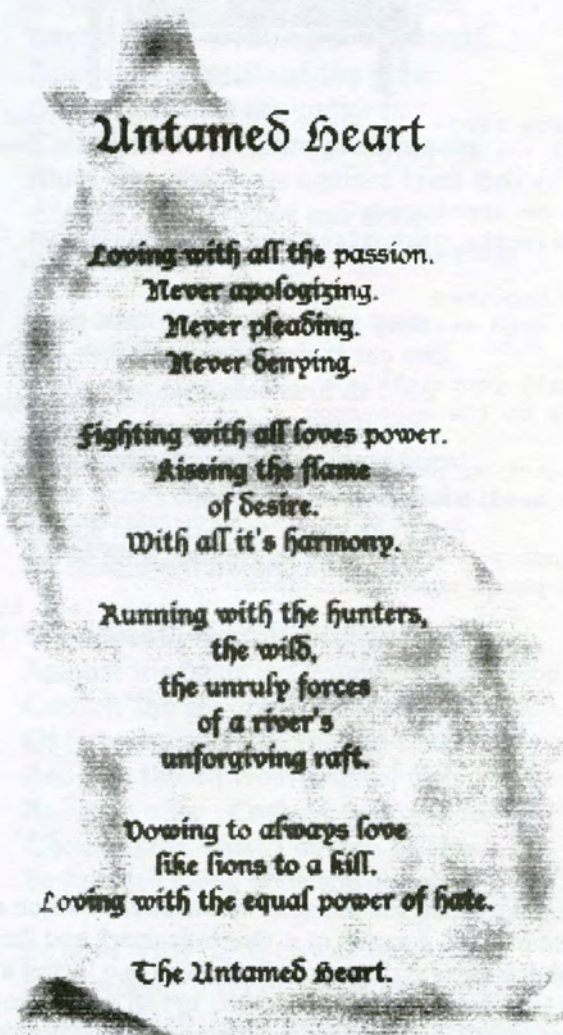
You look at me.  
HIV - POSITIVE

We cry.

## Untitled

By Melissa Bair

Burned up the ashes scattering down the street. I watch as it all blows away. The past the present, gone all of it. One little spark and the life that was built on love, blood, & tears goes up in a flash. Why is a loving and caring god so vicious to his followers? The pray and pray, get all they have is in a smoky ruin. The tears are shed but a sense of relief almost thankfulness is in the air. For even though its gone, the life that they know, at least they are together.



## Untamed Heart

Loving with all the passion.  
Never apologizing.  
Never pleading.  
Never denying.

Fighting with all loves power.  
Kissing the flame  
of desire.  
With all it's harmony.

Running with the hunters,  
the wild,  
the unruly forces  
of a river's  
unforgiving raft.

Daring to always love  
like lions to a kill.  
Loving with the equal power of hate.

The Untamed Heart.

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Why Is Uncle Jerry Dressed Like That?

By Brian Johnson

All my life, Uncle Jerry was kind of the black sheep of the family. He was a drunk. He would get drunk at various family get-togethers and leave everyone feeling ashamed after being publicly humiliated and more often than not ostracized. There were many attempts to reform Uncle Jerry. There were interventions galore. Virtually every one of these interventions ended in Uncle Jerry storming out. A few of them actually ended in bloodshed. I remember one time Uncle Jerry actually stabbed Grandma Mary in the stomach with a ball point pen. Thank God he missed her vital organs. We also tried electro-shock therapy on Uncle Jerry, but it didn't stop him from drinking, he just started peeing his pants a lot. Uncle Jerry was as out of control as a hyperactive 5-year-old on four hits of acid. We had no idea what to do with him. And then, all of a sudden, he was fine. We all wondered what brought about this change in him. Was it a new hobby? A job promotion? I thought he just found a new kind of booze that was very relaxing. Others in my family thought that it might be a woman. Turns out, they were right. Well, they were sort of right. You see, as it turned out, Uncle Jerry had a sex change operation. After his sex change operation, Uncle Jerry was a completely different person.

After Uncle Jerry turned into a woman, I was curious about why he had done it. So, with the encouragement of my family who were also curious, I started hanging out with him to find out what was going on in his head. "First of all," he said, "call me Auntie Jehri." I looked at Auntie Jehri and tried to soak it all in. Where he used to have a scraggly beard and wore only Harley T-shirts and dirty blue jeans, he now was clean-shaven, with bright red lipstick, permed hair, and a blue sundress with yellow daisy print. He was still 6'1" with a beer gut, but he said he was on a new miracle diet that would just melt that flab away. I finally got up the courage to ask him, "OK, Auntie Jehri, what is the matter with you?" He played with his hair and smiled. "Well you see honey, I was confused my whole life. Every day I would wake up and not expect what I saw in the mirror. It was like I always wanted to be something else but I could never quite figure out what it was. I was so depressed. I would come home from work at the steel mill and just cry in the dark. That's why I was always drinking so much. It was my only escape from the harsh reality I had to face. My random violence was also another outlet of mine. Of course the drinking helped that along, but I felt that I just had to lash out and hurt the world that was hurting me. Then one day, I woke up in a pool of my own vomit in a crack house laying next to some whore I didn't even recognize. I looked at that whore for a long time and thought, 'You know, she's got the life that I want.' Her way of life, the whoring, the seduction of drunken businessmen, the utter charm that she exuded, really sung to me in a voice as sweet as Barbra Streisand. So I sold most of my possessions and paid for my little procedure."

I stood there dumbfounded. I asked him, "Well, what are you going to do now? You can't go back to the steel mill like that - they'll beat the crap out of you."

Auntie Jehri gave a little giggle. "Oh honey I know that. I quit that job before the operation. I'm going to do what I've always wanted. I'm going to move to Tijuana, Mexico, and become the best prostitute they've ever seen. I want to feel as dirty as possible. I want to seduce all the tourists that come through and make tons of pesos. I want to be

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the queen of whores south of the border. I just want to live like a woman. A real lady."

All of this was too much to handle. My Uncle Jerry now wants to be a Tijuana whore. I couldn't let my family bear that kind of shame. So I walked to the kitchen and found a frying pan to beat him with repeatedly over the head until he came to his senses and reversed his operation. Sure, he was a sloppy violent drunk before, but at least he was *normal*. I found a frying pan with some good weight to it when all of a sudden Auntie Jehri said, "You hungry Bri-bri? Let's go to Burger King!" Well, I was hungry, and I do like Burger King, so I dropped the frying pan and followed Auntie Jehri out to his recently bought flaming pink 1977 Cadillac convertible.

We arrived at the Burger King. Auntie Jehri told me to order anything I wanted, so I ordered the chicken sandwich combo. Auntie Jehri had a small french fries and a small pink lemonade. This struck me as unusual, because Uncle Jerry would always order four Whoppers and two large fries. But I figured that I would be in for a lot of surprises from now on. We got our food and sat down. Everyone seated in the place was throwing bad looks at Auntie Jehri. I was so embarrassed to be there with him. Thank God that none of my friends were there. But just as I bit in to my chicken sandwich, two of Uncle Jerry's friends walked in. I recognized them as Earl and Big Roy. They worked with Uncle Jerry at the steel mill and drank with him frequently. I figured that Uncle Jerry would hide his face and hope that they wouldn't see him because they would probably beat him to death with their steel-toed work boots. But Auntie Jehri actually stood up, waved his hand up and down and said, "Yoo-hoo! Earl! Big Roy! Come on over and say hello to your old buddy!"

"Oh man," I thought, "this isn't going to be pleasant." Earl and Big Roy looked at each other and then back at Auntie Jehri. They smiled at Auntie Jehri and came to our table.

"Well hello there, sexy mama. I don't believe I've had the pleasure." Big Roy said as he slid next to Auntie Jehri.

"Don't know how you know us, pretty young thing. Must have heard of us by our reputation as ladies men," Earl said as he spit in his hand and slicked his hair back. All this time I was hiding my face behind some napkins.

"You know me boys," Auntie Jehri said. "Its me. Jerry Martin! Your old drinking buddy!"

Earl and Big Roy turned to sour milk in about two seconds. They shot up out of their seats and shouted every swear in the book at Auntie Jehri. Then Big Roy picked Auntie Jehri up by the front of his blue daisy print sundress.

"Boy, you done crossed the line. You disgrace the good name of Jefferson's Steel Mill and the United States of America. And now we're gonna mess up those new pretty looks of yours."

Earl then stepped in and delivered a shot to Auntie Jehri's stomach with a plastic tray. Auntie Jehri let out a hi-pitched scream of pain. I was sitting there and wondering what to do? Should I stop this? Maybe he deserves this. Maybe getting beaten bloody is exactly what he needs to set him straight. Then I looked into his eyes. They weren't the eyes of a horrible person or a pervert. They were the eyes of a human being. And there was hurt in them that didn't deserve to be there. I stabbed the steel napkin holder and swung it into Earl's genitals. Then I bashed it into the side of Big Roy's head and he

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dropped Auntie Jehri.

"Stop it! You guys have no right to do this," I screamed. "Sure, Uncle Jerry's a woman now, but that doesn't make him a bad person. It doesn't make him any worse or any better. It just makes him different. You have no right to judge someone for turning into something that they've wanted to be their whole lives. He's actually a nice person now, if you looked past the outside and looked at what he's like inside you would see that. He wants to be a Tijuana whore, and I for one support him. If you can't chase your dreams, then what good is your life? At least he's got guts and that's more than I can say for most people. Let's go, Auntie Jehri." Auntie Jebri looked at me with tears in his eyes. As we walked out of that Burger King and into the future, he gave Big Roy a last kick to the groin.

A week later Auntie Jehri moved to Tijuana. I never saw him again, but he sent me several postcards that would say things like, "Having a great time in Tijuana. Lots of degrading, dirty sex and margaritas. Hope you're doing well in school!" I'll never forget my transsexual Uncle Jerry. He taught me that a person should set himself free and not be afraid to show their true colors. Auntie Jehri's courage still inspires me. He wasn't a good man, but he was a *great* woman.

## UNTITLED

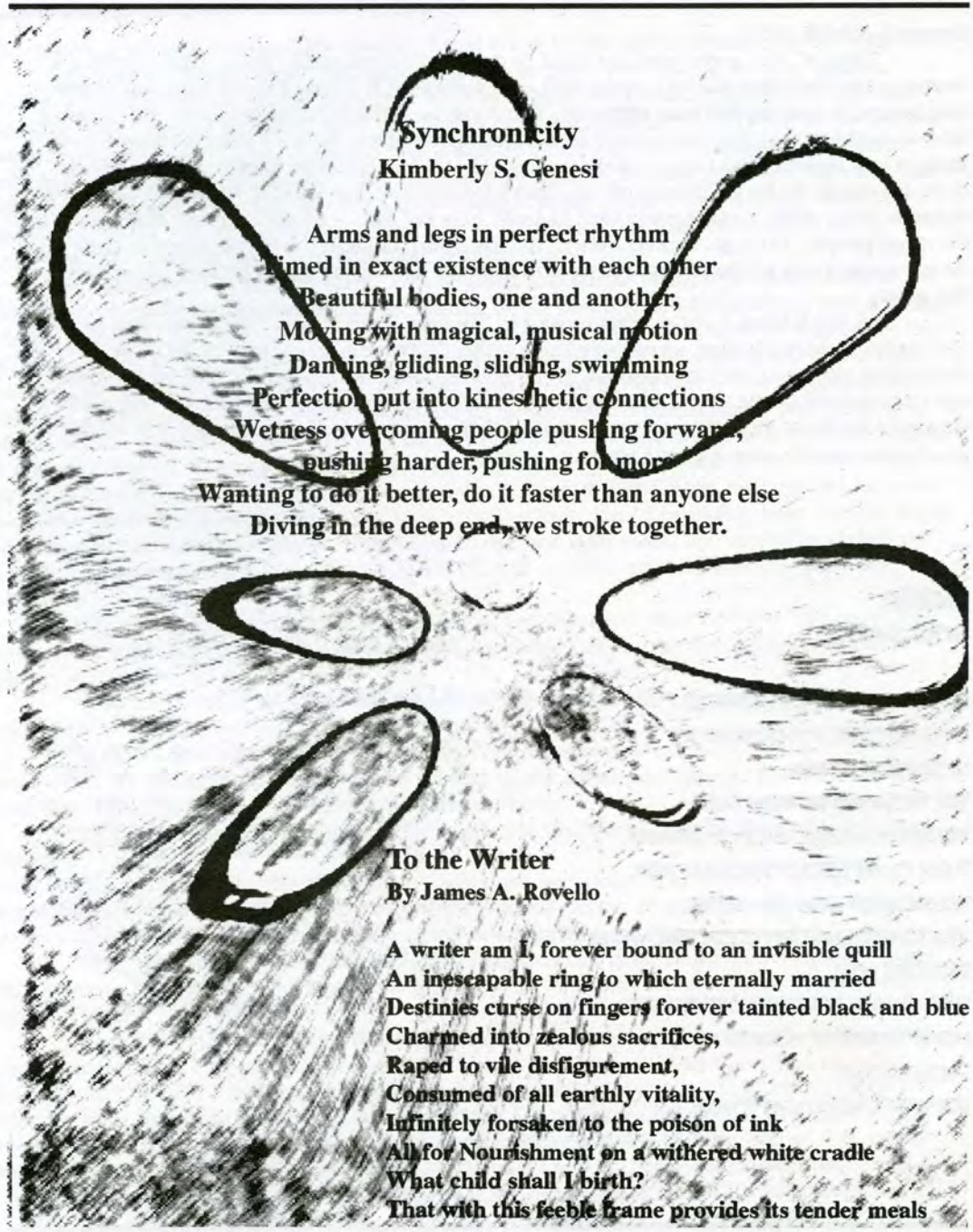
By BILL SEELG

SHADOWS STRETCH, REACH UPWARDS  
GRASPING FOR EACH OTHER'S STRENGTH,  
LOOKING FOR A FRIEND.  
BUT THE WIND IS BETWEEN THEM,  
PREVENTING A MYSTIC UNION OF DARKNESS.  
I LEAN ON THE BARK LOOKING UP AT THEM,  
HOLDING BACK TEARS CRIED BEFORE,  
TELECOMMUNICATING MY GOOD OR BAD WISHES TO THEM.  
BUT I CAN HELP.  
I'M DOWN HERE IN THE LAND OF THE BRAVE,  
NOT IN THE SHADOW WORLD OF THEIRS.  
I WOULD GO UP,  
BUT WHAT IF I CAN'T COME DOWN?

## "Just This Once"

Anonymous

You're what holds me up from falling  
and what lights up my day-  
the one I want to know me, the  
one to show me the way-  
It hurts like hell when I think  
this is the end.  
It'll take more than friendship for  
this heart to mend-  
I'm heads over heels, I want  
you to know-  
if you'd just kiss me this once...  
and leave me alone...



## Synchronicity

Kimberly S. Genesi

Arms and legs in perfect rhythm  
Timed in exact existence with each other  
Beautiful bodies, one and another,  
Moving with magical, musical motion  
Dancing, gliding, sliding, swimming  
Perfection put into kineshetic connections  
Witness overcoming people pushing forward,  
pushing harder, pushing for more  
Wanting to do it better, do it faster than anyone else  
Diving in the deep end, we stroke together.

## To the Writer

By James A. Rovello

A writer am I, forever bound to an invisible quill  
An inescapable ring to which eternally married  
Destinies curse on fingers forever tainted black and blue  
Charmed into zealous sacrifices,  
Raped to vile disfigurement,  
Consumed of all earthly vitality,  
Infinitely forsaken to the poison of ink  
All for Nourishment on a withered white cradle  
What child shall I birth?  
That with this feeble frame provides its tender meals

By Melinda O'Callaghan

I see you  
     as grand  
 as a platinum statue  
     placed up high  
 as a perfect sculpture  
     completely out of reach  
 as something more than  
 human  
     I see you  
         not as you are  
 but, as I'd like you to be  
     I see you  
         as a dream come true  
     as the collage  
         of all I ever wanted  
     as the calm of my storm  
     as the heat of my flame  
 as the rhythm of my song  
     I see you  
         as a fantasy  
 not as a reality  
 and because of that  
     I have missed  
         the truth  
     of who you are  
 knowing how I see you  
     I beg of you  
         to take away  
 these rose colored glasses  
     and let me see  
         your face  
 and help me to stop  
     being blinded  
 by my imagination.

I'm Not a Poet  
 By Jessica Canale

I'm not a poet  
 It's true I say  
 And I wouldn't have it any other way  
 My emotions are shallow  
 There's no pain in my heart  
 This poem took me almost an hour to start  
 I'll say it again  
 If you didn't hear it before  
 When I start writing poems, it always ends  
 with a snore  
 I don't sit and ponder  
 Why things are their way  
 To tell you the truth life is pretty okay  
 I can't write with feeling  
 Or write things profound  
 I can't think of something that rhymes with  
 profound  
 This poem won't contain  
 A depth anymore  
 Than any movie starring Pauly Shore  
 I'm writing this poem  
 To get extra credit  
 I hope that it's good enough that I get it  
 So instead of writing poem  
 Every day of the week  
 I'd rather watch my favorite show Dawson's  
 Creek



By Holly Smith

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## Don't Leave

By Melissa Bair

The pain when he left was too intense to talk about.  
 No one understood what I went through, Shellshocked & scared I wondered  
 through the motions of life. Crying screaming, what else could I do? Will  
 someone help me heal the hole in my life that his absence has created? Help  
 me, hold me, don't ever leave me. Where are you going, will you come back?  
 Don't leave me alone.

WAY OF WORDS

BY BILL SEELIG

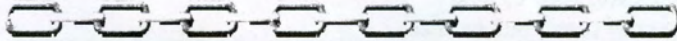
THROUGH THE FACADE OF A LIT-UP JUNGLE,  
 I SEE THE CONFUSED WAY OF WORDS LIKE GLOWING WOLF EYES,  
 PULSATING AND WRITHING THROUGH  
 A SHRAPNEL FILLED WHOREHOUSE  
 YET NEVER STRAYING TOO FAR FROM THE MOUTH  
 THAT BORE THEM.  
 JUST AS INTOXICATING WINE LIGHTS UP  
 THE SOULS OF A RAGGED KINGDOM,  
 NEW WORDS LIGHT UP A DULL LIFE,  
 FLOWING SMOOTHLY AS IF ON ICE. FROZEN.  
 LOOK AT THE FISH TRAPPED UNDERNEATH, YET HAPPY.  
 AND FACADES, OH YES!, WORLDS OF THEM  
 GROWING, BREATHING, SICK

EVERY DROP OF BLUE BLOOD FROM THE POINT OF WISDOM...  
 ...AND I LOVE IT ALL

LOVE THE WAY I JUST DON'T KNOW,  
 I'M NOT QUITE SURE, NOT QUITE AT HOME.  
 GROWING UP WITH VEDDER AND LOVE.  
 WHERE'S THE PAGE?  
 "WORDS DISSEMBLE, WORDS BE QUICK,  
 WORDS RESEMBLE WALKING STICKS."  
 SO YES, WITHIN THE WORLD OF THE WAY OF WORDS,  
 I AM HAPPY...

...ALTHOUGH MAYBE NOT CONTENT.





## Mind Eater

By Heather Clarke

Things gone by  
You've destroyed my mind  
I've eaten

Away

The good you have wrought

**IwasLeftHungryForMore**

Skipped through the blood  
That leaked from my heart

Painted war paint

I declared war!!

Cold is the steel

So I had to warm it up

The blade is warm

But your body is cold

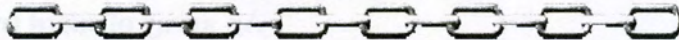
Oh, dear

Oh, well

Now I draw pictures of my mind

With your red life

I laugh now



Mourner's Lament

By Donna Jackson

© mislead creature, sore of heart!  
My mind and soul reach out to thee  
Across the great expanse of space  
Between my world and that of thine.  
Thou foolish soul; thou aching heart;  
Thy pain-wracked voice cries out to me.  
Though thou art gone, thou feel'st pain still  
And I still know thy empty heart.

© waylaid soul! How could'st thou take  
Thine own poor fate within thy hands  
And smite the spark that stirred us all  
In right and wrong, and made thee whole?  
© child of God, how could'st thy heart  
Have failed the faith thy father craves?  
And how must I continue on  
Along the path thou failed to take?

Thou foolish soul! Why must thee dwell  
In not my world, but thine alone?  
How foolish I, to hear thy moans  
And still condemn thee to thy fate.  
For now must I dwell with my pain  
While thou art severed from thine own.

**Dark-haired Venus**

By Richard Lyszczyk

Fire burns inside hotter,  
than white hot delicate skin,  
to which the world melts.

An array of silent truths held,  
in the depths of shadows,  
lost and known unto her.

Drifting through time unforgotten,  
it sails along bound to a forever,  
only you can capture.

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