

The Mosaic



Robbie Hyer

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THE MARIST COLLEGE LITERARY MAGAZINE

THE MOSAIC

Spring 1982

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Art is the stored honey of the human soul,
Gathered on wings of misery and travail.
Theodore Dreiser

EDITOR'S NOTE

Permit me, please, to comment briefly on behalf of THE MOSAIC and its parent organization, The Marist College Literary Society:

Two years ago, The Marist College Literary Society was functioning without a literary magazine. The Society was, at the time, simply a "fraternal" organization which brought together, under the guidance of Dr. Milton Teichman, a number of intelligent and dedicated students whose collective interest lay in the field of literature. The magazine had ceased to be published because literary and artistic contributions from students were not forthcoming.

However, in apparent opposition to what is commonly called student apathy and after The Literary Society itself demanded a reissue, THE MOSAIC was reborn and consequently hit the stands in the Spring of '81. Generally, student reaction was favorable; unfortunately, because of publicity and distribution problems, not enough students were aware that the magazine was again a functional organ of communication.

Well, we believe we have solved both the above-mentioned problems. We, meaning my editorial staff and I, further believe that we have made the magazine into a reputable top-notch college publication. We base our belief not only on the massive numbers of submissions which we received this year, but also on the incredible numbers of student inquiries related to the publication date which we answered. We remain confident that THE MOSAIC will continue to flourish in the coming years.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those intelligent, sensitive, and dedicated students who helped me put together this year's magazine. I include, of course, the contributors: those whose works were published as well as those whose works were not published. It is a pure and unending delight for us at THE MOSAIC to know that a real and substantial cultural liaison composed of students can and does exist on campus.

I would also like to thank the members of my staff for their unswerving devotion to the cause. Especially, I wish to thank my assistant editor, Kate Hedges, for the indefatigable manner in which she attended to the responsibilities entrusted her as an integral part of the staff. I wish also to thank Mary Beth Kearney for the patience she showed me as we worked together to meet a deadline. Lastly, I wish to thank Dr. Milton Teichman whose confidence in Man's creative potential helped make this endeavor wholly successful.

I hope you, the reader and the student, enjoy the magazine.

Kevin D. Hancock
Editor-in-Chief

CONTENTS

Preface	II
Table of Contents	III
"La Vie": Karryann Guerin	1
"To Mr. Lewis": Thomas Weissenberger	
"A Flight Dilemma": Denise Dedio	2
Untitled Poem: Karen E. Lund	3
Untitled Poem: Jennifer Langner	
Untitled Photograph: Kevin Sipperley	4
"Trees In Winter": John Russell	
WHAT ARE DOLLS FOR, ANYWAY?: Ellen Zimmerman	5
"A Starlit Journey": Denise Dedio	6
"Winter Day": Joanna Rosato	7
"Cat": KSRH	
"In Memory of WSH (1890-1958): HDJ	
DELUSIONS: Marshall Wood	8
"Was It Good For You?": Bill Herron	9
Untitled Poem: Chris Barnes	
Untitled Photograph: Ted Waters	10
"This Morning": Bill Herron	
Untitled Poem: Chris Barnes	11
"A Conversation": Kevin D. Hancock	
THE SIX SHOOTER: Guy Fiore	12
Untitled Photograph: Kevin Sipperley	19
"Delivery Room": Jim Slater	20
B/W Ink Drawing, The Corpse: Andrew Sherman Evans II	21
"The Corpse": Andrew Sherman Evans II	22
Untitled B/W Ink Drawing: Andrew Sherman Evans II	23
"The Sea": Andrew Sherman Evans II	24
"Silent Sentinels": Theresa Pearce	
Untitled Sketch: Renee C. Martin	
Untitled Poem: Rick O'Connell	25
"James Douglass Morrison": Guy Fiore	
"Eine Fakte Der Lebenwelt": Anna Angell-Young	
SPERM ON TRIAL: Anna Angell-Young	26
"Portrait": Karen Johnson	27
Untitled Photograph: Ted Waters	28
Untitled Pencil Drawing: Caroline Kretz	29
"Ballerina": John Russell	30
CAMARADERIE: Maria Argano	
ONE MAN'S JOURNEY THROUGH DESPAIR: Theresa Pearce	33
"Buffalo Station": Jim Slater	34
Untitled B/W Ink Drawing: Anna Angell-Young	35
"October Sun": John Kraus	
Untitled Poem: Jennifer Langner	36
Untitled Poem: W. Lewis	

LA VIE

Of seed and sun
I have grown
branches, shoots.
Leaves are home now
for birds. Nesting warm
beneath the green.
Sturdy, brown.
Chairs are made now
for man.

In lightning's wrath
I have feared
broken limbs.
Smitten by one
who is greater. Redwood,
Oak, we are one.
Stretching bare babes
to the light
on winter's morning.

One hundred years
I have worked
splitting earth.
Men have died here,
hung. But again
I give them birth.
Salvation, hope.
Christ died upon
my cross.

Kerryann Guerin

TO MR. LEWIS

A herd of books
gallops through my brain:
mustangs and pintos
from the Apache range.
I lasso one before the class,
calm it and look into the
blood-rushed eyes,
nostrils flaring:
a sleek Melville or a stubborn Twain
refusing to come to pasture,
letting us pet them
for 75 minutes;
then charging the gate
and galloping away...

Thomas Weissenberger

A FLIGHT DILEMMA

A bird is well adapted
For a life in open space,
For searching,
For flight...

Scanning lightly white capped blue waters
Displaying merely consumed freedom;
Breathing and swallowing time.
 An ecstasy of eagles in flight...
Gliding across even the ruggedest blue waves
Performing an artful exhibit;
Endlessly forward, never looking aft,
 Fulfilling dreams, preserving keepsakes.

Circling through the parched blue air
Lingering frequently;
Reluctance to overlook the past.
 A solitary eagle in flight...
Floating on blue mists of reflecting coral
Reminiscing concealed thoughts;
Hesitation becomes completely inherent.
 Searching for dreams, extending keepsakes.

Viewing the broken blue line of the horizon
Sustaining barely;
Memories are blocking time.
 A solitary eagle...
Searching until the blueness becomes a thickened grey
Wading in the overcast;
Confronting a time dependency.
 Oblivious to dreams, seeking keepsakes.

Feeling finally
Sparkling blue raindrops
Compelling the past
To be chilled
 A freebird in flight
 Fulfilling his dreams...

Denise Dedio

Poets call upon the muse,
swiftly the spirit brings
lines and rhymes
to the artist.

No artist I, no poet.
My voice is strange
and foreign to the muse,
laughter its only answer.

Bring message from my madness?
Sense and lyric from my mind?
God called order out of chaos,
light from the darkness;
from a silly piece of dust came beauty.
I, that mindless piece of clay.

Karen E. Lund

The Frost,
From fragile petals
 falling...
In crystal slivers
and silver shards.

The Rose,
Trembling in anguished
 ecstasy...
Her soul exposed.

Lifting her silken head
As if in prayer,
 the Flower turns...
Seeking the Sunbeam's source,
 and finds
 You there.

Jennifer Langner



Photo by Kevin Sipperley

TREES IN WINTER

They stand naked against the sky,
Bleached branches are like bones
Of undernourished arms extending,
Pleading to receive mercy.
A change in weather caused their leaves to fall,
Like those defeated in a political climate
That has shifted: One cannot live
When one gets too cold.
Broken bark has become black;
Many are cut down,
are thrown on the fire, turned to ashes,
are scattered by the wind, and cover the face of the earth.

John Russell

WHAT ARE DOLLS FOR, ANYWAY?

When I was younger, dolls were soft, embraceable toys that resembled real babies. My playmates and I used our imaginations to give them life; we imagined cries, coos, gurgles, and burps, and soothed them in fancies of motherhood. But now has come The Age of the Labor-Saving Device, of games and musical instruments that come dangerously close to playing themselves. Dolls have not escaped the onslaught. The floppy, huggable cloth body has been phased out in favor of hard plastic, a plastic that encases the mechanical components, which leave a child's imagination unexercised.

I recently saw an advertisement for a doll with "velvety-soft skin just like a real baby." Little girls no longer have to make-believe that pink cloth cheeks are kissable baby-smooth ones. But the doll falls short of the advertisement; its face is covered with a peach-colored fuzz that wears off in scattered patches when subjected to childish caresses. It's very realistic, you know. I'm sure that somewhere there are real babies with razor stubble because Mommy forgot the morning shave.

Of course, it is easier for a little girl to pretend her "baby" is real if it performs those bodily functions for which newborns are notorious. The more ambitious little mother can purchase "Baby Alive." The doll comes with her own multicolored food gel which is spooned in at one end and deposited at the other. The little mother then can change the genuinely soiled diaper, and no longer has to be satisfied with inadequate imagination. But again, I think the doll misses its mark. A truly realistic doll should not eliminate waste in assorted pastels.

Ever one knows that babies are not always healthy and happy. So, to take care of this problem, we have "Baby Wet and Care." The child plops two pink tablets into a little bottle of water, then "feeds" the doll. The concoction travels through the doll's body and colors special bright red spots on the little posterior. bright red. Voila — diaper rash! The toy company did sacrifice the true-to-life quality of the doll, though, when they made it possible to wipe away the spots with a treated cloth. Why did they do this? After all, they could have made a mint on "Baby Wet and Care Ointment."

As little girls get older, they become curious about the growing-up process. Every little girl owns a "Barbie" doll, which is, to put it discretely, fully developed. Now, to help little girls understand adolescence without bothering Mommy with a lot of silly questions, we have "Growing Up Skipper," Barbie's younger sister. The doll looks like your average eleven year old kid, until you raise her left arm. Then, she blooms from a 28A to a 26C. Quite amazing, really, that such a complex and emotionally difficult period in a girl's life can be so cleverly simplified, reduced to one movement of the arm.

How will children learn about other life events such as divorce or aging? Perhaps the toy companies will pick up where they left off and bring us "The Barbie and Ken Marriage and Divorce Kit," complete with a reusable judge. A "Barbie Gives Birth" doll is a good idea. She could dispense with labor in one arm movement just as "Skipper" breezes through puberty. How about "Barbie Golden Years," with sagging skin, arthritis, and a Social Security Check? The possibilities are endless, and the children are waiting.

Ellen Zimmerman

A STARLIT JOURNEY

Pursuing the path of a shimmering star,
One that reflects on the highest mountain
With soft flickers that light up the darkness,
Reviving the mystery of the journey.
 Bound to a search for an answer,
 Seemingly disguised in the path.

Trusting the viewed sensation
A path of light heedfully laced to the mountaintop
With snow-bound trees that penetrate the mist,
Inspiring the asset of strength.
 Committed for a password,
 Hidden in the perception of beauty.

Focusing on the unexplored
One small ridge of melting snow
With the magnitude of one perfect snowflake,
Animating a passage of the undiscovered.
 An indication not yet in sight,
 A latent dimension of hope.

Following, yet still, the odyssey.
Sprightly rushing form
With a brook as the setting of a simple birth,
Capturing the novelty of innocence.
 The conception of a search,
 Unintentionally dissembled.

Leading the path far down
Shaded banks thrive from adamant turbulence
With the star's dimming light crystallizing on the brook,
Pronouncing the vibrance of life,
 The revealing of a response,
 Never guaranteeing where the search will lead.

Reaching finally the light-dimmed descent
Guided to a flourishing meadow
With murmuring flowers growing in the profusion,
Alluring the revelation of nature.
 The answer distantly bound,
 In the path of twinkling star.

Denise Dedio

WINTER DAY

Nothing could compare with the sight of you,
dark curling hair swept about on that
snowy day.

It seemed as if you were made to be walking
amidst a background of white, cheeks ruddy
on top of coffee and cream skin, the expanse
of your shoulders squared in your bulky coat.

If I were to describe the reason for my feelings,
it would have to be the look of you in winter,
as you smile upon me, the reflection of snowflakes
in your deep, sparkling brown eyes.

Joanna Rosato

CAT

The cat comes quiet to my room,
Looks right and left, from light to gloom.
Sits on the sill,
And never will
Allow me close to his cocoon.

K.S.R.H.

In Memory of WSH (1890-1958)

October is my favorite month,
The month that I was born.
And everytime my birthday comes,
I get up just at dawn.
My mother bakes me cakes and things,
And boy, don't they taste good!
But she won't make me anymore,
If I don't bring in the wood.

HDJ

DELUSIONS

It was a warm, hazy July morning that was threatening to get hot. Half dozing, I sat reclined on a soft seat looking at my boss as he talked about the day's oncoming job.

"Some of these Pollacks look like someone put a monkey with an ink bottle in front of the canvas and then shot three thousand volts through its body," he exclaimed.

My boss has a way with words.

But I wasn't really thinking about moving the world renowned Jackson Pollack paintings. So I just rolled the back of my head over the head rest and smiled indifferently. More asleep than awake, I was listening to the steady hum of the large truck engine I had come to know so well. Riding in this monstrous vehicle, I thought, makes me feel like a king on his throne who, every once in a great while, looks down on his subjects. 'Big Easy', as it is called by the employees, is a fine truck with one of the best bodies in the art transporting business. Its varnished interior is satiny to the touch. The exterior is encased in tough, white aluminum. Just before I fell asleep, I realized that I was a part of this truck; I was the vital human organ that helped keep it alive.

I was suddenly awakened by a sharp jolt, but I did not open my eyes; my instincts told me we had stopped. There were only two reasons for this to happen. Either we had reached the museum, which did not seem possible given the time factor, or the rush hour traffic had slowed us down. My curiosity was short lived as the cacophony of a hundred different cat horns boxed my ears. Then, as if Aeolus' anger had been provoked, came a dry, hot, blasting wind which crowded its way inside the truck through my boss' open window. It whipped and scorched my face, stealing away what was left of my sleepy, placid expression.

I sat up, viewed the situation, rolled down my window, and observed in disgust a legion of cars, bumper to bumper three lanes wide. This meant we would be trapped in this torturous Hades for at least a half an hour.

Son-of-a bitch," my boss exclaimed, "The Modern is expecting us in an hour."

He then began to complain about the roadworkers cleaning the Long Island Expressway in the daytime when the job could be done at night. I did not respond; I was not now in a mocking mood. Maybe in ten minutes, but not now, I thought. I just felt like looking.

Noticing something to the right of the truck, on which side I was, I glanced down and espied a black Mercedes sportscar. Behind the wheel sat a lone female driver. She was about twenty-five, blonde and beautiful. Out of boredom, she placed her feet on the dashboard. As she did this, her light purple dress slid down, exposing her downy, Hampton-tanned legs. The chick was obviously annoyed with the whole situation. I think she began to get the idea that she was being watched, as she slowly turned her head towards me and we made eye contact. I threw her one of my 'Baby, where have you been all my life?' glances. Apparently, she wasn't too pleased as her quaint little smile seemed forced. Then, as if she were an automaton, she quickly turned her head in its original direction. Her feet returned to the pedals, and she was gone with the traffic. The truck, also, began to move, and my employer had a slight grin on his face as he looked ahead and began following the long chain of cars and trucks. He knew.

Suddenly, his mask changed to a look of seriousness.

"We just might make the Modern by ten o'clock," he said with the sound of hope. "Remember," he added prophetically, "the opera's not over 'til the fat lady sings."

Marshall Wood

WAS IT GOOD FOR YOU?

1. Bar of hot iron
Butts hard on belly.
2. Musical perfume fills
and overfills my head.
Rays out my eyes in rainbow
Flows out my mouth and into you.
Still, the low dam holds
And the brute sea builds.
3. Can't get enough air in my chest.
Can't get enough air out.
Arms ache to hold
Ham to be held, and pulled
To that swollen bud, that eden rose.
4. The long teasing roll beginning regular
little pokes; easy, all tenderness in variety; quick long slides
Build the voltage, the spark cries without sound to leap the gap
In the middle of moans and panting gasps
Uhn Uhn Archaic images of gorgons grinning batter my eyes
Until I break Until I'm through Until you break...'til we're through
5. We touch down on your spinning quilt
Roll apart
And as I focus, some part of me wonders again
If all this isn't too much like work.

Bill Herron

Two
Overeasy,
Lorraine,
(French)
And Benedict,
(A good egg)
- He
Each morning
Makes her
Cook
Three minutes,
Her sunny side up
Then
They scramble downstairs
For breakfast.

Chris Barnes

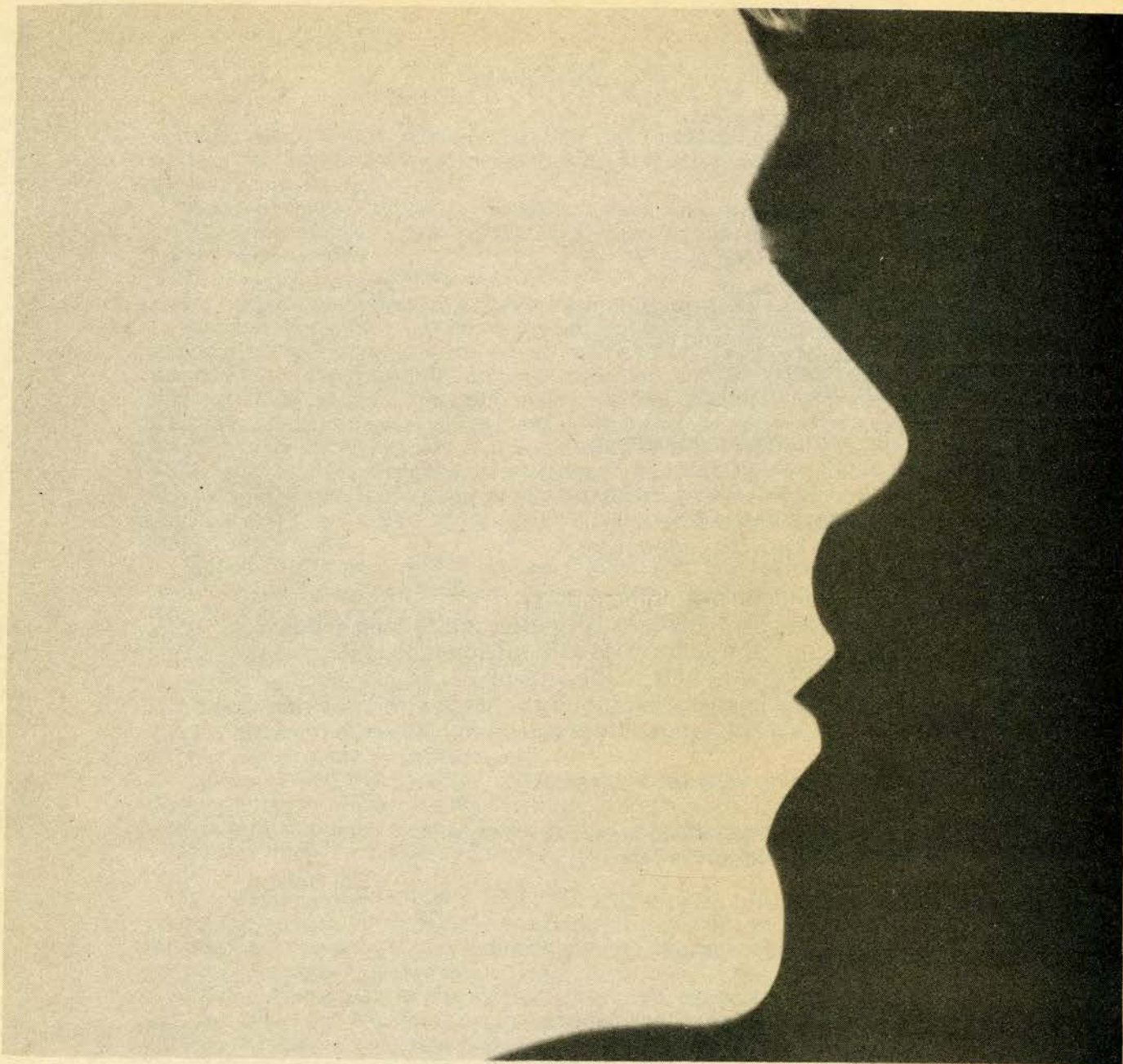


Photo by Ted Waters

This morning

I open the men's room door
And E. (black, my height, the janitor)
Is standin' there.
It's like looking in a mirror,
And I jump.
Then I realize who it really (?) is,
And the world snaps back into place.
Who **did** I meet this morning, E. or Me?
At 7 in the morning, I'm not adamant on matters of identity.

Bill Herron

People
on streets
I read
Without names
Names
On Walls
I read
Without people
Or not Known
To me together
As I pass by
Reading
How many people
I've passed
Whose names I've read
On walls
And names
also
I've passed
Whose people I've read
on streets.

Chris Barnes

A CONVERSATION

A dark and bitter young man with a sunken forehead and graceless features walks casually into a dilapidated, paint-peeled five-and-dime store with the intent of buying a pack of filterless cigarettes. The cigarettes are stacked neatly in vertical rows behind the purchasing counter; they are stacked each according to the brand. The young man approaches the counter; slowly, but without hesitation. There is a young blonde girl with regular features behind the counter; she wears a dull blue work smock and dull blue double knit work slacks; the smock has pinned to it a tag with no name. The young man smiles formally and asks for a pack of filterless cigarettes. The young girl steps back, deliberately, turns and reaches for the pack. She returns to her original position and hands the pack of filterless cigarettes to the young man. The young girl quotes a price. The young man hands a bill to the young girl, and requests change. The young girl complies and entreats the young man to come again. There is a moment of detached silence as the young man places the change in his pocket. He smiles a formal smile and retreats.

Kevin D. Hancock

THE SIX SHOOTER

Chris Whitman scurried quickly down the stairs into the den and turned on the TV. He was about to start looking for his glasses when he realized he was wearing them, so he plopped himself down in the big brown recliner in the corner and stared at the face in the TV.

"Good evening," it said, "and welcome to the Sunday evening news. Our top story tonight — an eighteen-year-old Bronx man was indicted today for the shooting death of his forty-one-year old mother and his six-year-old sister. The man, police say, was found sleeping in his Bronx apartment shortly after the victims' bodies were found in the boiler room. Police, as of yet, have not determined the motive, but the man was described to reporters as a 'heavy drug user.'"

Chris got up and shut off the TV. He thought about the newscast; he pictured himself as the murderer.

"O.K. mom," he said to himself pointing at the wall. "Boom! Boom! Ha!"

The door at the top of the steps squeaked open and a shadow appeared in the stairwell and on the wall.

"Hey Chris, you down there?"

"Whaddaya want?" Chris asked.

The shadow on the wall got shorter and shorter as a figure came hustling down the stairs. It was Bill Whitman, Chris' brother, younger by one year but taller and more filled out. He was frequently mistaken as Chris' older brother.

"Listen bro, the guys and me are gonna hit up some beaches on the island. You think you could lend me a ten spot till Friday?"

"Nope. Sorry."

"C'mon man, I'd do it for you. What are brothers for anyway?"

"I don't got it."

"You got ten bucks," Bill insisted, "why can't cha lend it to me?"

"Look," said Chris, "I told ya I don't have it, and even if I did I wouldn't lend it to ya 'cause I don't trust ya!"

"You're a weasel, Chris, ya know what I mean? A real schmuck!"

"I'll beat yer ass, wuss," Chris retorted.

"Any day, weasel, an-ny day." With this Chris turned around and cuffed his brother in the cheek, but Bill came back, grabbing Chris in a headlock and wrestling him to the ground.

"You little weasel! I'll kill you!" screamed Bill as he slammed his clenched fist into the back of his brother's head, "I'll break every bone in your wimpy body!"

The upstairs door swung open, and the high-pitched, nagging voice of a middle-aged woman confirmed it to be the boys' mother.

"What the hell is goin' on down here?!", she screeched as she hastened down the stairs.

By then Chris had wriggled his way out of his brother's awesome headlock, and was defending himself from the powerful, hardhitting blows. Bill got up and ran up the stairs.

"You creepy little wimp!" he screamed from the top of the stairs. Mrs. Whitman watched the younger boy flee, then turned around to face Chris.

"What the hell's the matter with you? You're SUPPOSED to be older than he is; why don't you start acting your age?"

"But Ma," argued Chris, "he came down here and started with ME!"

"Oh, yer so full of it! You're always starting with him, the poor kid."

Chris picked up his glasses, which had gone sailing across the room, and put them back on.

"I don't believe this!" he bellowed.

"Well you better believe it, mister. And you better believe that when you turn eighteen next year you best have a place to stay, 'cause you're NOT STAYIN' IN MY HOUSE!"

She turned and started to walk up the stairs. Halfway up she stopped and added, "And don't bother comin' ta dinner tonight unless that room of yours is cleaned up! It's a pigsty!"

She continued up the stairs and slammed the door behind her. He could hear her cursing herself for having 'a kid like that.'

Chris dropped down on the floor into a crossed-leg position. He looked around the room. The couch, the TV, the bar, the dumb recliner. I'm sick of all this shit, he thought. I can't wait to go and be rid of it all, including this family, — for good!

He fixed his eyes on his father's gun collection, which was hanging on a rack above the couch. He could never understand how a man like his father, an old fashioned man and a pushover as a car salesman, could have such a passion for guns and hunting. But he figured that it was just his old man's way of releasing himself from the pressures of his wife.

He got up from the floor and walked over to the assembly of guns. Below the three shotguns on the rack was a series of four pistols. He picked up the one farthest to the left, a .38 caliber 'Saturday Night Special.' He liked that name, and he liked the power he felt behind the gun. He spun the chamber around. He knew his father never kept any of the guns loaded, but he had heard of a lot of people blowing themselves up when they 'thought' their guns weren't loaded, and he didn't want to take any chances. He pointed the gun towards the top of the stairs.

"Boom! Boom!" he pretended.

He drew the pistol back and ran his fingers over the barrel. So smooth and shiny, he thought. Sure is a good feeling. He returned the gun to the rack and looked at his watch. To hell with dinner, he figured. It's already six-thirty. He sauntered over to the phone on his father's business desk, and he dialed.

"Hello?" asked a voice on the other end.

"Who's this?" asked Chris.

"Who's this?" asked the voice.

"This is Chris. Is Pauline there?" There was a pause.

"Just a second, I'll see." One second later, Pauline got on the line. She sounded bored.

"Hi Chris. What's up?"

"Who was that?" Chris demanded.

"Who was who?" she asked dumbly.

"That guy that answered the phone!"

"Oh him," she said, "that's just my neighbor Jack; he just came over for a beer."

"You wanna do somethin' t'night?" he asked uneasily.

"Oh, I don't think so Chris, I'm beat."

"You're the one always beggin' me to take you somewhere. Now when I ask you, you don't want to go!"

"Gawd," she said, "why are YOU in such a bad mood?"

"Well whaddaya want, ya know?"

"I'll tell ya what Chris," she resolved, "why don't we talk in school tomorrow when you're more rational. Maybe I'll come over or..."

"I'm rational now!" he broke in.

"Well," she sighed, "I gotta go. I'll see ya tamorra, alright?"

"Good-bye!" he screamed, slamming down the phone.

His mind became filled with jealousy as he thought of his girlfriend. Obviously, she was alone with her neighbor, for her parents would never allow her friends to drink in the house. She's only sixteen. He thought of the man's voice. It was deep and raspy and definitely much older than seventeen. It was more the voice of a man than that of a teenager. It'll be hard to compete with a guy like that, he thought. It's even hard competing with guys my own age.

Chris couldn't stop thinking about it so he decided to take a drive down to the lakefront and catch a quick buzz. It was a good day for a drive. The late-spring afternoon rain had stopped and had thus produced a warm, damp evening; the kind of night you'd want to spend with your girlfriend, he thought.

He checked his pockets: keys, smokes, pot and pipe, all there. Good. He raced out the adjoining door to the garage, squeezed past his mother's Buick, and opened the garage door. In the driveway sat his little green VW Hatchback, still dripping muddy water from the rain. He pulled out his keys, unlocked the door, and climbed in. The stale air trapped inside always made the car smell like a trash can, so he rolled down the window before starting up the car, just in time to catch his mother's screams.

"I'm not cleaning up that room!" she said as he backed out.

"Fuck You," he said casually under his breath.

He rolled up the window as he got under way, and the little wagon rattled down the puddled road toward the petcock of his problems, the lakefront.

II

It was beginning to get dark when he pulled into the lake's parking lot. The lot was empty, except for an old man whom Chris frequently saw strolling along the lake. The man had a long, grey beard, and a hunched back. He carried a brass cane and wore an overcoat; he wore the same overcoat every day. Chris, as usual, paid no attention to the stray man.

Instead, he backed into the farthest space on the left, next to a huge boulder which lay under a big, shady elm tree. He cut the engine and sat silently in the dark, thinking that he should have got some dinner before he came. Out of his pocket, he produced his wooden, handmade pipe and a bag of pot. He unrolled the bag and checked out the weed. Lots of seeds, he thought. What a bummer. He lowered the bowl into the bag, scooping up seeds and pot. He packed it in with his thumb. Then, he rolled up the bag and placed it in his pocket. The seeds began popping as he lit the bowl with his butane lighter and proceeded to get high.

When it was finally played, he tapped out the remaining seeds and ashed into the ashtray and lit up a smoke. He took a long, deep drag from the butt, leaned his head back on the seat as if he were exhausted, and slowly blew the used smoke out his nose and mouth.

Stoned as hell, he thought again about that newscast. I'll tell you the motive, he said to himself. The guy's old lady hated him and she was probably a nag like mine. He had every right in the world to kill her. The thought stuck in his mind. I could do it, he thought. I hate my family so much; I COULD DO IT! He started the engine. Man, he thought, I gotta get some tunes in this thing.

III

All the outside lights were off when he pulled into his driveway. He tripped on the steps of the porch, falling on his knees into a puddle.

"Shit!"

He looked in through the picture window. His mother was in the dining room, vacuuming, as usual. He entered the front door, and he hadn't taken more than two steps when she dropped the vacuum and rushed over in a mad fury to stop him.

"Get those god damn muddy boots off my carpet! Don't you have any consideration? Can't you see I just cleaned this shit up?" Chris said nothing and began walking back out to go around through the garage.

"Go see your father," added his mother cynically, "He's got a surprise for you." He flashed her a look of hatred and took off out the door.

He entered the den through the garage and found his father sitting at his desk in the far corner.

"Ma said you wanted to see me?"

"Yes I did," said Mr. Whitman, "Sit down." Oh no, Chris thought, another lecture.

"Now look son, I put up with a lot of shit from you; your grades, your freeloading here, and even that girlfriend of yours." He reached into his pocket and pulled out a joint rolled in strawberry-red rolling paper. Chris recognized it as one that he himself had rolled.

"Your mother found this in your room today when she was cleaning. Now I know why you act like you do all the time. You're a pothead."

"It's only one joint, Dad," Chris explained.

"Look here young man! I will not tolerate the use of drugs in my house. Do you understand?"

"Dad - "

"DO YOU UNDERSTAND?!"

"Yeah. Yeah, I understand alright."

"You're seventeen years old, Chris. Why don't you do us all a favor, especially yourself, and change your attitude. It STINKS!"

"Why don't you change your attitude?" snapped Chris.

"Because I don't live in your house! You live in mine. And as long as you live in my house you will live by my rules. I'm not the type of man to threaten his kids, but if I ever catch you smoking pot while you're living in my house, so help me God, I'll kick your butt up and down this street! That's all!"

Chris sat in the chair, leaning forward with his hands crossed between his knees, and his eyes fixed on the collection of guns above the couch.

"Are you listening to me boy?"

"I heard you." said Chris getting up. He was about to go upstairs when the phone rang. He spun around to the desk and grabbed the receiver before his father could get to it.

"Hello?"

"Hey dude. This is Dave. You don't sound too good. What's a matter?"

"Old man just scammed on one a my bones."

"He smoked 'em?"

"Nooo, man. I'll explain it to ya later."

"Alright. Hey dude, the reason why I'm callin' - are you pickin' me up for school tomorra?"

"Yeah, I guess so."

"O.K. dude. That's all I wanted to know. I'll catch ya tomorra."

"Yup."

Chris hung up the telephone and trucked up the stairs to his bedroom. Just as he had expected, his mother had cleaned, vacuumed, and dusted it. He took off his boots and lay on his bed. He started thinking about the day's events and soon drifted into a deep, well-worn sleep.

The next morning came all too soon. Chris had slept soundly all night in his clothes, and at six he awoke to face the new day. By seven, he had showered, grabbed his lunch money from the counter, and was on his way to Dave's house.

Dave lived on Sunset Street, in the most secluded house in town. Chris loved the house. When he reached it, he stopped in front of the driveway and beeped the horn. Dave came trampling out the front door, half dressed and half awake.

"What's up dude?" he asked as he climbed in.

"How's it goin' Dave?"

"I got us an E.M.B., dude."

"A what?"

"An early morning bone, man." Dave stuck a perfectly rolled pin-joint in his mouth and lit it up. "This is good shit," he cautioned.

"You always say that," Chris reminded him.

"Just drive, wise-ass, you'll see."

They tumbled down the road toward the school and pulled into the "7-11" across the street from their destination. Chris broke out his lunch money.

"How 'bout running in and gettin' my butts for me?"

"What am I, your slave?"

"C'mon, Dave."

"Get out!"

Chris ran in for his smokes and was out of the store in a flash. He opened the pack of smokes and lit up one before putting the car back in gear and gliding over to the school. He parked not in the closest spot but in a practical one on the grass, and the two boys got out.

"You know Chris," said Dave, "this car reflects your personality."

"What do you mean, hoser?"

"Very plain, dull, and no class."

"Oh, you suck, Dave."

"You better be nice to me, dude. If it wasn't for me, you wouldn't have any friends."

Chris was about to say something, but stopped himself because he knew what Dave said to be true.

"I got an eight o'clock class," said Dave, "How 'bout you?"

"Nope. I'm gonna see if Pauline's here yet. You need a ride at ten, right?"

"Yup."

"O.K. I'll meet you right out front."

"Sounds cool, dude."

"Later, Dave."

"Yup."

Dave walked in the front door, while Chris walked around to the side where crowds of students were passing around bowls and doing up E.M.B.'s. He spotted Pauline seated against the wall with another girl that Chris recognized as Ann Pazanowski, a girl who spent more time with Pauline than he did. Both girls were wearing faded blue jeans and matching jean jackets. Pauline was wearing a bandana around her head and she had a button above her breast pocket that read, "SMILE IF YOU'RE STONED."

"How's it goin'?" Chris asked as he sat down, facing the two girls.

He never kissed her in school. He didn't know what her reaction would be, and he always 'bugged out' when he was that high and thought everyone was looking at him.

The two girls casually said hi and continued on with their conversation about something 'Jack' had done. Ann listened intently as Pauline explained.

"... and all of a sudden he grabbed the wheel from me and swerved out of the way. We came about six inches from hitting that other car!"

Still talking to Ann, she turned toward Chris and said, "Chris would never have been able to do that. He can't even stay on his side of the road when HE's behind the wheel..."

"Oh I could just imagine Chris in that situation," said Ann, "especially with THAT car!"

The two girls laughed. So Jack had taken her out driving too! Goddamn, he thought, what the hell's goin' on here?

Finally Pauline decided to aim the conversation at Chris.

"So Chris, you gonna take me out tonight?"

"Well I don't know. I'm such a bad driver, how do you know I won't kill ya?"

"Fine," she replied, matter-of-factly, "We won't go out." Chris was really beginning to feel inside all the abuse he was taking.

"What did you want to do?" he asked weakly.

"I don't know."

"Why don't ya come over to my house?" he suggested.

"Pick me up at six-thirty. If you're late, don't expect me to be home."

"I'll be on time," he promised. "By the way, I'm not goin' to any classes today. I feel kinda sick. I think I'm gonna split for home."

"Oooohh. Pooooor baaaaabby!"

"Yeah. I'll see ya tonight."

"By-ye."

IV

Chris got into his car and headed towards town. He was angry and frustrated, and practically screaming at himself as he drove down the highway.

"Why me?! Why does everyone hate me? I wish I was never born. These fuckin' people; they make it so goddamn impossible for me to live my life."

He pulled up to a red light and was still yelling at himself when a girl in a light blue Mustang pulled up next to him.

"Fuck 'em," he said, "I'll show 'em."

He turned to the car next to his and found the girl shaking her head and laughing at him as the light turned green and she pulled out. Must be pretty funny, he thought, to see someone talking to themselves. Something to gossip about to her friends. The bitch. His mind was made up. No one was gonna make a fool out of Chris Whitman anymore. There was serious business to take care of, but first he had to get stoned.

He cruised through town and pulled into a Friendly's Ice Cream parking lot. He parked the car in a corner spot and went through the ritual of toking a bowl; only this time, he smoked two bowls. When he made sure that he was finally and thoroughly wasted, he headed back to his house, and as he expected, found it deserted. He headed straight for the den. Tears streamed down his face as he lifted the .38 off the rack.

"I gotta do it!" he cried. "I can't take this shit ANYMORE!"

He opened the box of ammunition and loaded six rounds into the pistol. Then, he closed the chamber and secured the safety latch. He looked at his watch: nine forty-five. Time to pick up Dave. Good, get that out of the way, he thought. He stuck the .38 into his jeans and covered the stock with his exposed flannel shirttail. It's worth it, he thought, it's gonna be worth it!

Chris had been waiting, with the engine running, in front of the school for about fifteen minutes when Dave finally came strutting out of the main entrance.

"It's about time," said Chris as Dave got in the car.

"I was talkin' to Ellen Karp. Besides, it was only you waitin'," joked Dave.

"What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"Nothin'. I was ONLY kiddin', dude. Cool out. Wanna do some bowls, dude?"

"Where?"

"My place. My parents are at my cousin's wedding in Cold Springs. They won't be back till after midnight!"

"Let's do it," Chris agreed. Once again, they came to the old house at the end of Sunset Street. Chris parked on the road, and the two boys crossed the driveway to the front door of the house. Dave's room was in the attic, so they climbed the two flights of narrow steps and the ladder that led through the ceiling. Dave turned on the stereo. Johnny Winter's "E Z Rider" was playing, so he cranked up the volume. He turned towards Chris.

"This is a good — YO, MAN, don't point that thing at me. Suppose it's loaded!" Chris had the weapon out, aiming it five feet from Dave's head.

"Dave, you're using me. When you had a car you never even thought about calling me. You only call when you need a ride, or when you want to get stoned. We been gettin' high at least once a day for a long time, and that little pin joint you had this morning was the first time in two weeks that we smoked YOUR pot!"

Dave still thought the gun a hoax.

"Yeah, but that's no reason to kill me," he joked. "C'mon, dude, put the thing away and let's get..."

Boom! The shot was fired and Dave fell backwards. Seconds later, blood began oozing out of the hole in his forehead. Chris stood there, not knowing how to react.

"I did it," he said, as if he were in a trance. "I KILLED HIM!"

It was done. Time to move. He fled down the stairs and in a heartbeat was in his car and on his way to the lakefront. The gun, now with one vacant chamber, was shoved back down the pants and re-covered by the shirttail. He reached the lakefront, parked under the big elm, got out, and lit a butt before stretching out on the huge rock. He would wait until everyone was home for dinner before making his next move.

V

He left the remaining five rounds in the chamber when he put the gun in its rightful spot on the shelf. He sat down in the big recliner and waited. Just as he was about to doze off, the stairwell door squeaked open, and the high-pitched, nagging voice that he hated so much roused him.

"Chris? If you're gonna eat tonight, then you're gonna sit down and eat with the family."

"Alright Mom, I'm coming."

He lifted the pistol from the rack and eased it back down to its homemade holster. He heard his father talking to his brother about school. He never talks to me about school, he thought. Come to think of it, he never talks to me about anything.

He made his way up the stairs and entered the kitchen. His mother was filling plates for the other two men at the table.

"I got a call from the school today, Christopher. You just decided you didn't want to go, huh?"

"I had better things to do," he said coolly.

He turned away from the table, and drew out the pistol. He spun around and pointed the weapon directly at his mother's forehead. Before any of them could react, he fired three shots. The brief look of horror on their faces made him smile.

"I had better things to do, MOTH!"

For the first time in his life he was in control of his family. He felt so powerful and so free. But it wasn't over yet. There was still one more problem to take care of.

He arrived at Pauline's house twenty minutes early. She had just finished eating when he knocked on the door.

"Hi! I'll be ready in a second," she said with a smile. She was always nice to him in front of her family.

She grabbed her brown suede jacket from the coat closet, the jacket she always wore to his house to give his parents a good impression.

"I won't be in too late," she yelled on the way out, "Bye Mom."

"I told ya I'd be on time," Chris said as they neared the car.

"Let's go to the lakefront and blow a few bones first," Chris suggested good-naturedly.

"Sure," Pauline replied.

Chris pulled the car into the parking lot, and as usual, parked it under the elm.

Once again the lot was empty, except for the old haggard man. The two got out of the car and Pauline edged her way to the top of the big rock, as Chris closely followed her.

"How come you're always such a quiet thing around me in school?" she asked.

As she climbed, Chris drew the pistol and held it to the back of her head. Without a word he pulled the trigger and killed off the last of his pains. He jumped from the rock and faced the car. The old man was circling the lot as he had done so many times in the past. Chris put the pistol to his ear and took a deep breath. He pulled the trigger and his body fell flat across the hood of the little car. The old man stopped for a second and strained to see what was going on. With the help of the brass cane, he turned slowly around, and began walking toward the lake.

Guy Flore

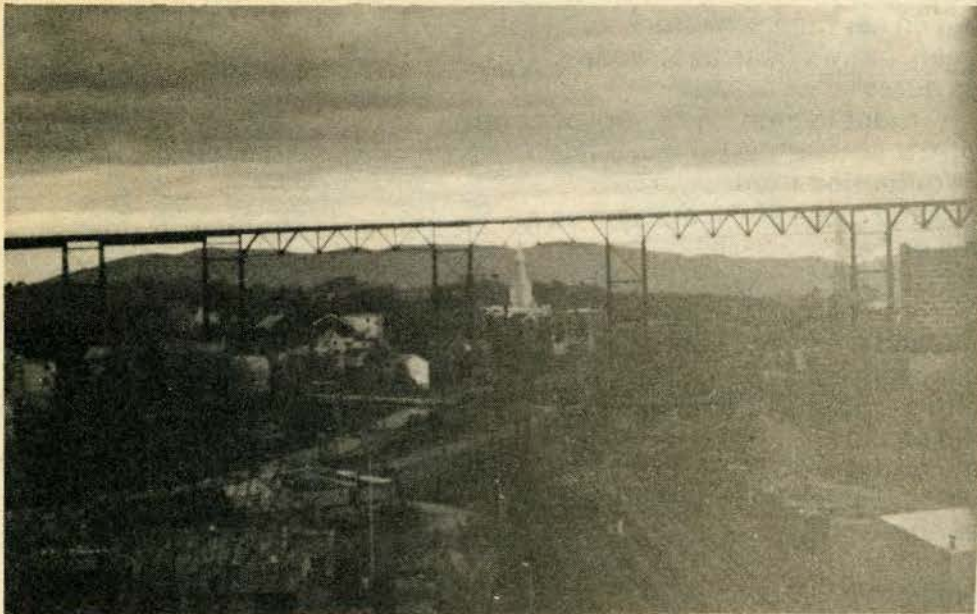
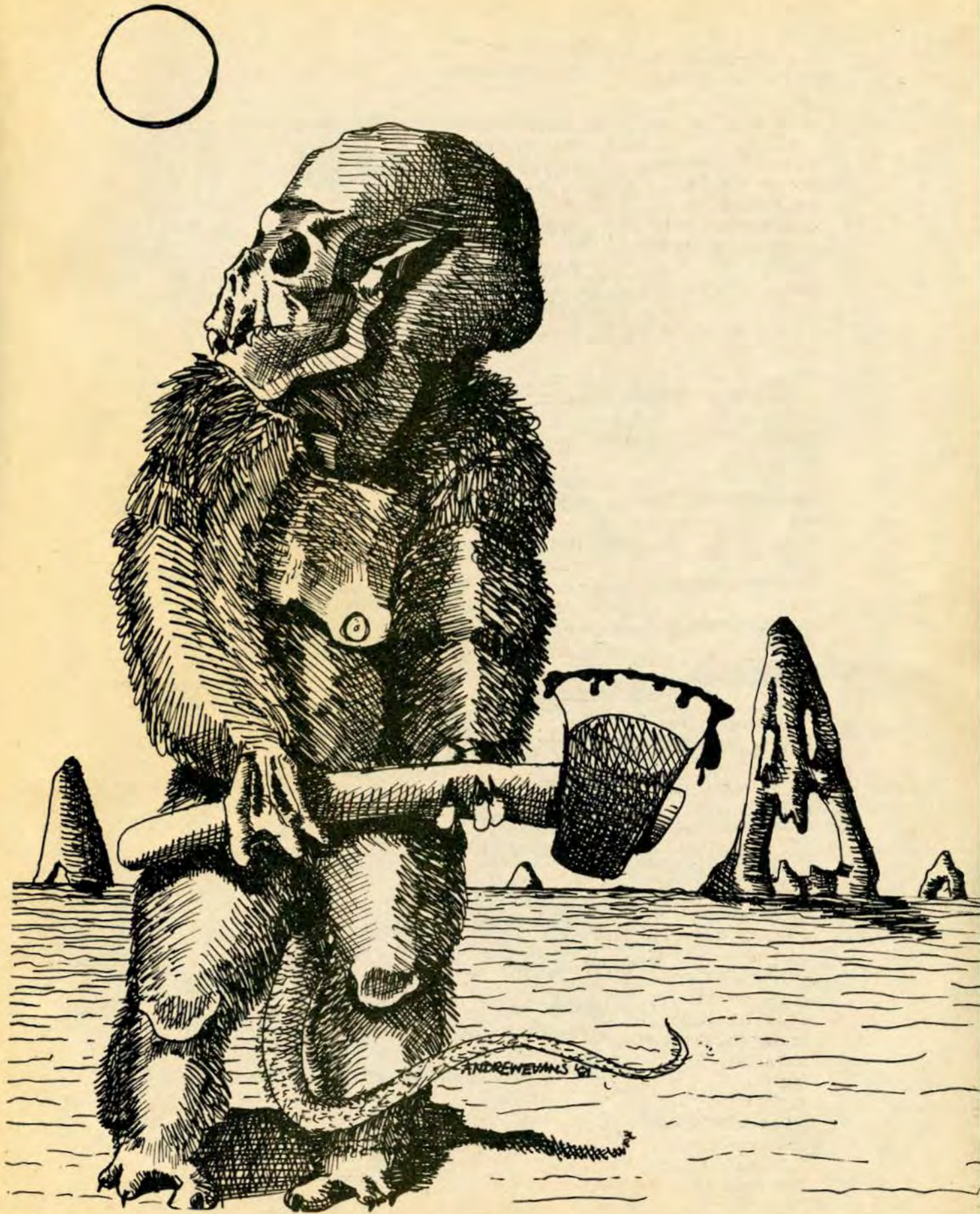


Photo by Kevin Sipperley

Delivery Room

Monumental Moment
Nine Month Moment
I sit
at her shoulder
she
draped in green
doctor, nurses
walls, floor, me
in green little peter pan slippers
metal and glass and masks
bright
the mirror as round
as the image of your head
in the apex of the Y of her legs
the reflection
bright
metal and glass and masks and breathe
says nurse
don't touch anything green
and I, green,
try
to separate from me
we
closer than nine months ago
she
an almost mother
we
almost three
me
cheering like a leader
comeonkidyoucandoitkidcomeonkidcomeonkid
green
mask on her face, what for?
oxygen, baby's heartbeat weak
says nurse
bitchy robot in green with soul of shrub
bright
light reflection from
metal and glass and masks on us all
come on kid
little blood, it's okay
reds out of place
metal and glass and green
and mirror
you're growing longer at the apex
come on kid
come on kid it's 3:05
metal and glass and masks and green
are gone
sight
submits
to another sense
my daughter, your
first breath
The loudest sound I've ever heard

Jim Slater



ANDREW EVANS '61

The Corpse

The bleak emptiness of some dusty asteroid,
In the blackly, vast galaxy,
The crackling sensations of skulls,
As maidens in a row...

In my God damned cemetery!

The iced, briny liquid flows from my
Forehead, dead. buried, soiled.
The agony of damned souls,
As Hell's fires burn.

Rotting flesh,
Rotting blood,
Rotting guts,
Stinking, rotting cadaverous masses.

That shriek of the insane,
As the coldly, black bird howls...
Echoing,
Through the empty graves.

Alas! the loneliness, the death,
As Satan dances above the sinewy mound,
The dogs lick the scum,
Vomiting, crawling upon the poor damned.

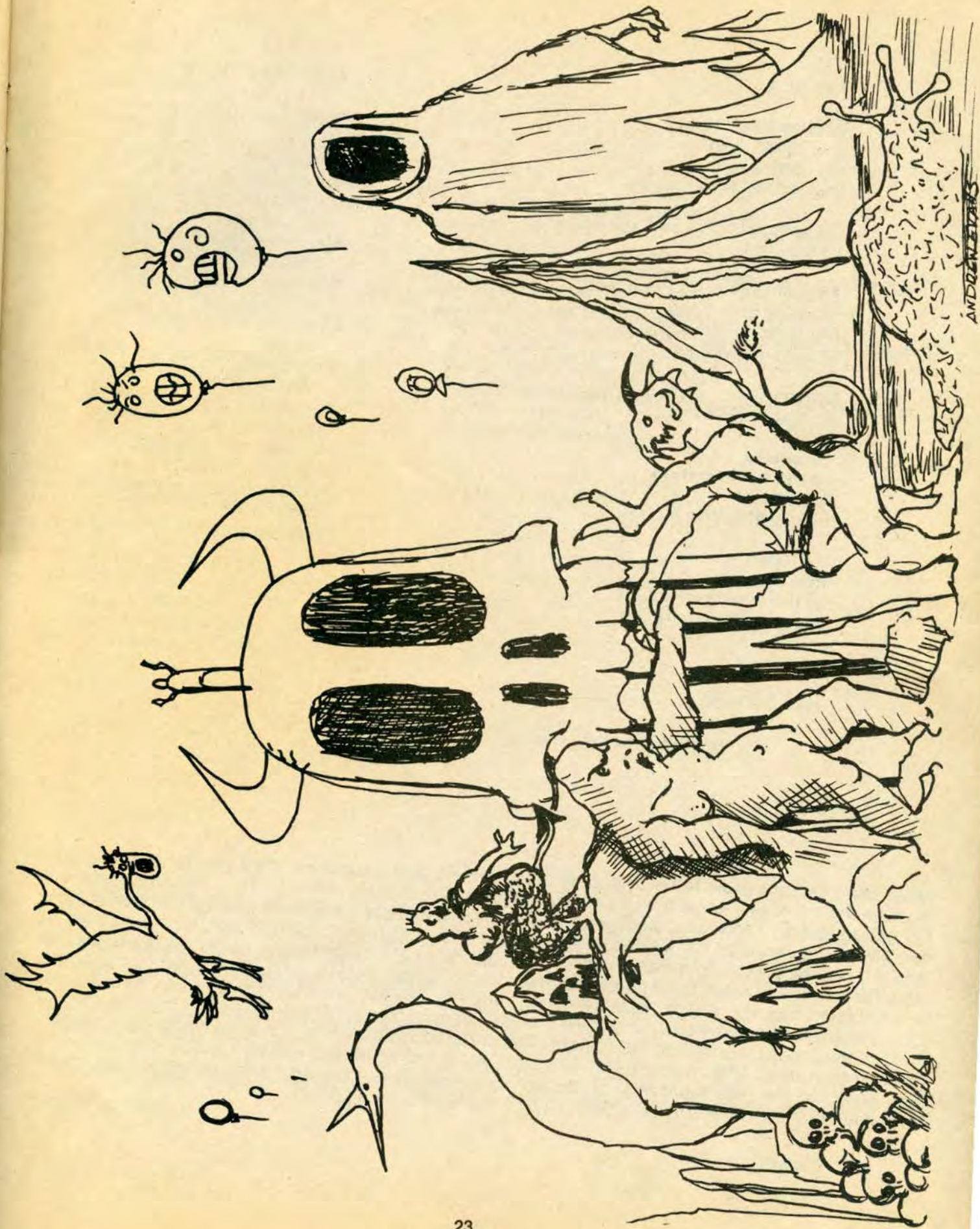
God help them,
Help them from the worms.
Help them from the soil,
The demons, the wormy dogs, the puke.

Liberate them from their caskets.
Give them Apolloness,
Strength,
Glowing and Clean...

Ashes to ashes,
Dust to fucking dust.
Flesh,
To crawling flesh!

The corpses lay.

Andrew Sherman Evans II



THE SEA

In tattered clothes,
a wrinkled man
sat upon a rock
that looked over the sea

Clasping his chin with bony knuckles,
he thought.

Thoughts pierced the waves.
Floating out to sea,
Mingling with the music
of passing whales.

Singing,
As a chorus of one.

He smiles
as the waves caress
his feet
like an attentive mother.

He looks
into the setting sun,
as it warmly looks back
like a largely godly eye.

He thinks...

men are fools.

Andrew Sherman Evans II

SILENT SENTINELS

Silent sentinels line
Darkened days
Lonely lifting limbs,
Deep despair
Desperate dreams of
Kinder days
Bittersweet bastions
Satan's slaves
Wasted wombs ripped apart
Perished pawns
Chosen children guard gates
To hell
Murdered memories,
Umbilical hell
Surgical suicide,
Doctored death
Mangled mothers mourn
Shattered shells
Haunted hearts, certain hell
Cherished child
Weeping wounds upon a cross.

Theresa Pearce

When the shadows grew taller until they disappeared, and the moon threw shafts of dusty light through the trees, she knew it was time to rise. Crawling closely to the ground, she emerged from her hiding space. There was electricity in the air; in each tiny particle in the light shafts around her. The energy entered her as she moved through the night. She stopped, her huge eyes peered through the darkness. When she was still, no sound could be heard. But with every advancing step, the sounds of small forest animals fleeing reached her ears; a squirrel scurried to the safety of a hollowed log, the sleepy birds awakened and flocked to the heights of distant trees. As she rose and stretched to her feet, she knew that she wanted food. The fear that hung in the darkness and the dampness intensified her hunger. She crouched suddenly and moved swiftly and silently through the forest. She stopped. Reaching quickly to her right, she pulled a rabbit from behind a tree. She could feel the rapid beat of the animal's heart as she brought it to her teeth. It squirmed furiously. Ripping at the soft fur, she devoured the animal voraciously.

Renee C. Martin

Dry and pumping
into the night.
Holding back
and pulling tighter.
Blood rushes forth
awaiting the channels
to grow stiff.
The dam is broken
and a burst of fear,
rushes forth.
Red covers all,
death is on its way.

Dry, but still pumping.
The night grows old
and the day begins
an end
to life
as it was before.

Bursting through the valve
in a gush
rather than spurts.
As the center of life
shuts down
and pushes out
the red cells of love.
The roots grow hard.
It's gone.
I listen...

Nothing.

Rick O'Donnell

JAMES DOUGLOUS MORRISON

Mere words;
Philosophically generated into aberrant coherence.
One radical soul;
Enticed by the boundless entities of poetry.
Why such a penchant to drown your intellect recklessly,
and intoxicate your sanity with repressants?
Dangling from the transepts;
Regarding mortality itself as the ultimate limitation.
Only to lastly fall.
Fall from the outskirts,

The
Big
Sleep.
Just merited,
With the sincere gratitude,
OF the lives you changed.

Into

Guy Fiore

EINE FAKETE DER LEBENWELT

Man is king of the cockroaches,
Everyone knows, he has crowned himself so.

The king hides his bread from his subjects,
assured this decision is wise.

Yet the wordly pests, neither knowing nor caring nibble away at His Majesty's sustenance.

Anna Angell-Young

SPERM ON TRIAL

The gavel strikes to open the 235th U.S. Congress. The issue at hand is the total elimination of birth control. Males have been using prophylactics to hold back their sperm, and today The Congress is convened to decide the fate of conception.

The first speaker is a man. He states: "Your Honor, I believe this an issue for men alone to decide. We contributed our genetic heritage to our children and their lives depend on our lives. We have dedicated our lives to raise and teach these children, and we have helped to form all the young minds which inhabit the Children's Cities. We sacrifice for them, and we gladly offer to them those opportunities we have missed so that they may more fully develop their own unique qualities. But we must be allowed to determine, for ourselves, how many children we can capably handle at one time. We are overpopulated now! A child should be able to grow free from want and with dignity of purpose. Quality of life is the sole issue."

The chairwoman replies: "Certainly we recognize the contributions of men. Were it not for them, Philosophy, Religion, and Psychology would not have become Reality, and progress would have come to a halt with the nuclear family. But the question is the preservation of life for all individuals, and The Congress must put aside personal feeling and interest when it determines the rights of those children too weak to speak for themselves."

Another man speaks: "But Your Honor, God gave me this body. It's my penis and my sperm. I suggest that this is not a matter for the legislature or the courts to decide, but one instead that should be ruled by our own God-given consciences. I resent having my sperm sent to banks where women are free to choose the type of child they desire. Surely the unborn individual should be considered, but I'm an individual too! I think that I should be able to determine my own fate, and that I should be able to share in the lives and destinies of my own children."

The chairwoman heaves a dolorous sigh under the weight of Truth and exclaims: "There is Truth in what you speak of, my son. But do you not see how God, with Her Divine Wisdom and Omniscience, just as She has given you divine conscience, has naturally aborted those children who would have been an abomination to mankind had they survived. One cannot place one's self above God in determining who should and should not live."

A zealous Congresswoman stands in defense of the state. She displays glossy photos of magnified sperm cells, and she defies the crowd to dispute that these gametes are alive. She advocates and elucidates the cloning process in a brilliant manner of discourse, and she favors the important part that sperm plays in producing workers for The State. Her arguments elicit a favorable response in the chamber; for eloquence is often mistaken for Truth.

Her final comments are as follows: "Think long and hard Good Women, what holding back sperm means. It means that these children will never laugh, never love. Holding back sperm is murder!"

Applause erupts

The gavel strikes again.

The Chairwoman issues advice to the assembly: "Beware of sensationalism. We are not engaged in a circus. The Destiny of our children rests on our decision today."

Before the vote is cast, a caution is issued by The Speaker: "Each of us stands alone in the universe, and we must answer to a higher force than

this court for the choices we make in our lives. We cannot begin to comprehend the Divine Plan. For It is Absolute, and we are but mere mortals. All we can hope to do is to seek the God within ourselves, and with compassion strive for an understanding of what constitutes our neighbor's belief about a right to life."

The vote is cast.

The men have won by a narrow margin.

The sperm banks will be closed.

Cloning without State authorization will be permitted no longer.

Paternity becomes a matter of choice, and by law, the practice of birth control, an "inalienable right."

Democracy prevails.

It is a great day in Herstory!

Anna Angell-Young

Portrait

Happiness captured in innocent eyes;
Hidden within, fortunes of soldier's strife
In illegal gold trapped deep behind bars.
In flight she is free, her treasure chest far.

Her wings as she soars, sculptured hands tell tales
Waving in tune with the ebb of the breeze.
Her hair hiding among the clouds of time
daring, teasing the edge of my canvas.

Her beauty testified in her portrait;
My paintbrush is dripping with sharp, quick strokes
of lips tiny creases, laughter etching
the eyes that glisten in the smiling sun.

Reflections mirrored in her pale, white skin
radiate forth in herald of her death.

Karen Johnson



Photo by Ted Waters



Charles Worth

BALLERINA

One moment she is poised upon the point of her toe,
Her eyes are unblinking as she concentrates; the slow
Movement of her arm drifts down as the piano notes
Ripple through the twilight of the room, then she floats
To the floor with her head gently bent to her chest.
Suddenly she springs like a faun in a forest:
Frightened by the footsteps of a hunter in the wood.
She leaps through the air from the place where she stood;
Like a diver that anticipates the working of a muscle,
There is no hesitation in her turning; in the subtle
Creases in her shoes: they barely touch the floor.
She lifts her head high, like a bird she will soar
As the crescendo rises, then tumbles down the walls.
Slowly, she spins in a circle on the balls
Of her feet, then she softly folds her arms to her bosom.
As if before the presence of a deity from
A mystical kingdom, she kneels quietly, with her eyes half-closed
Sitting in repose like a lotus on a lake.

John Russell

CAMARADERIE

'Twas a day in late October, I was feeling far from
sober, while I was carrying my load with manly
pride. When my knees began to stutter, I lay down
in the gutter and a little pig came and lay beside
me. As we were lying there together, like two
friends in stormy weather, a lady passing by was
heard to say: "You can tell a man who boozes by
the company he chooses." So the little pig got up
and walked away.

Anonymous

I left Frisco in February '32. Lost my job in the grape fields in '31, when the drought set in. Things were lookin' bad since '28, but they held on to me as long as possible. Bein' that I was a good worker, the boss, Jed, liked me. But times was so bad he just had to let go of me. Not knowin' where to go, or what to do next, I decided to head east. Had some savings, but nothin' much. You know, not havin' a woman or kinfolk of any kind, I didn't figure I needed to save much. In the fields, the guys always find ways to squander money on gamblin', drinkin', or women. Now don't get me wrong, I didn't mind that kinda life at all. When you're 'round those guys all the time you gotta do like them if you want them to like you. Not that I'm braggin' or nothin', but those guys used to love havin' me 'round.

But all those guys were gone by now. Each one havin' gone his own separate way. I heard Larry went up to Oregon and Joe to Montana. In fact, one day Sam and me was talkin' and he told me Bill had packed up long ago

and was now workin' a freighter ship outta Anaheim. He told me Bill got hitched through a brother. That's what they call nepotism or somethin' like that. I know I wouldn't have got the job.

Anyways, I was talkin' real deep to Sam and I asked him what he was up to. He didn't know, just like none of us didn't know. But he said he'd been wandering up and down the coast lookin' for work, but never could find nothin'. So when I asked him if he wanted to head east with me, why, he become as anxious as a penned up buckin' billygoat. Course, lookin' as he was desperate as me, he couldn't no how refuse. We didn't have no serious direction or plan, so we figured to take it slow across the states and see if we'd find anythin' along the way.

We decided instead to go south, 'cause the weather was warmer and we could bring less clothes and things that way. Come the beginning of March, we hitched a ride on an orange truck headed for Tijuana. All we did the first few weeks was reminisce about the old days in Frisco.

Course, me and Sam was never too tight back then, in the old days that is. But, hell, we had a mutual respect for each other. Maybe that was 'cause he was a big guy, like me. He had thick, red hair that looked sorta bushy, sorta like the negras wear their hair. He had big arms and a big chest, stood about six three and weighed, God almighty, two forty. I was pretty much his size, so between me and him, we was a pretty pair to behold.

Well, we went to New Mexico and Texas and we worked odd jobs here and there, but things weren't lookin' any better. Man, even if you did get hired before all the other guys standin' in line, even if you did work like an ox, they'd let you go once they run outta money. Besides, they didn't need no man in particular, not in those times. Why, I 'member goin to a ranch down San 'Tonia way. There was openin's for five men. There was two hundred fifty men standin' in line! That alone could make a man not want to bother anyhow. I don't know if you know what it's like bein' strong, healthy, young, and wantin' real bad to work and not bein' able to find a man who could use your services. Even to shine shoes or milk cows! Damn degradin', it is. Certain it don't help the morale of the individual. Makes him kinda feel worthless and cheap like. E'en the hardest man likes to know he's gotta job doin' and a reason for livin'. Sam and me talked about this all the time we was on the road. In fact, it seemed like we was talkin' over a bottle of whiskey or bourbon about life and sort of philosophizin' about our condition more than we was workin' or e'en lookin' for work.

I 'member by July neither of us had worked a job since April. And we wasn't lookin' no more either. We was, if I 'member correctly, in New Orleans, and the town was full of men just like us. We'd get our bottles, meet in the park, and just plain share the company and liquor. By that time, Sam and me was closer than I ever thought rightly possible for two real men to be. It wasn't like we was funny or nothin'. We'd just share everythin', from our smallest thoughts, to the last swig of the bottle.

He seemed to be changin', Sam did, though I couldn't guess what was wrong, but he was just clammin' up on me. I couldn't get him to tell me nothin'. I started to really worry 'bout him. Like maybe his mind was goin' or somethin'. He started wandering off my himself a lot. I didn't ask too many questions and he didn't no consolin' talk. I hardly saw him in September and October. He'd come 'round once every two weeks or three weeks for a day or two. I missed him a lot, and I meant to tell him so. But whenever he'd come 'round, he'd be real distant. I didn't want ta seem pushy or nothin' so I'd just look at him real inquirin' like. Only, he'd ignore my stares and study me. Seemed like the only reason he came by was to intrude on my private thoughts. He'd stare and watch everythin' real intently, but he'd never make a comment about nothin'. Now, like I said, a man gotta have comfort from his friends, in times such as these were. But Sam didn't want no comfort, not e'en from the bottle.

He came by in late October. Stayed for a whole week. Actin' real strange too. Actin' as if nothin' ever happened. I took him in again, just like any pal would do. I didn't do nothin' suspicious neither. I thought he'd tell me what was happenin' in due time. He did too, sure enough.

That last day of the week, he approached me and said, "Ned," 'cause that's my name, "this is the last time you'll ever see me. I know you been wonderin' what I been doin' these past few months. And I appreciate your not pesterin' me about what it was. But I didn't want you discouragin' me about what I know I gotta do."

My face musta turned ashen grey. I really thought the guy was out to kill himself. But I kept my usual sober self and listened.

"You and me," he went on, "we've talked about this before, and I pretty much know how you feel. You'd be glad not to work another day in your life. You're happy here among all these guys who think just like you think. Drinkin' your sap and talkin' about the things you'd like to do. How you don't like the way the world is, and how you and the guys could change it if you had the chance. Settin' you in destitute and forcin' you on the bottle, givin' you no choice but to accept this unproductive life or go mad."

Now I was really gettin' worried. Sam was lookin' at me real curious like and he was turnin' a fiery sort of red. I thought he was gonna jump at me. I didn't know what to say. So he just continued, but in a wilder way. By this time, he was wavin' his arms, strikin' out at air. Seemed like he was tryin' his damndest to make himself clear.

"And I don't like it," he bellowed, "not at all, and I just can't live like this no more. I realize if there was work none of us would be in this mess. So I did some thinkin' 'bout how I could live without the necessity of the bottle, the guys, of anyone other than the natural things for survival. And that's just what I done. I built me a place far from here, in the darkest, blackest, backest part of the woods. And I'm gonna stay there. I ain't comin' back into the world, and I hope I never see another man as long as I live."

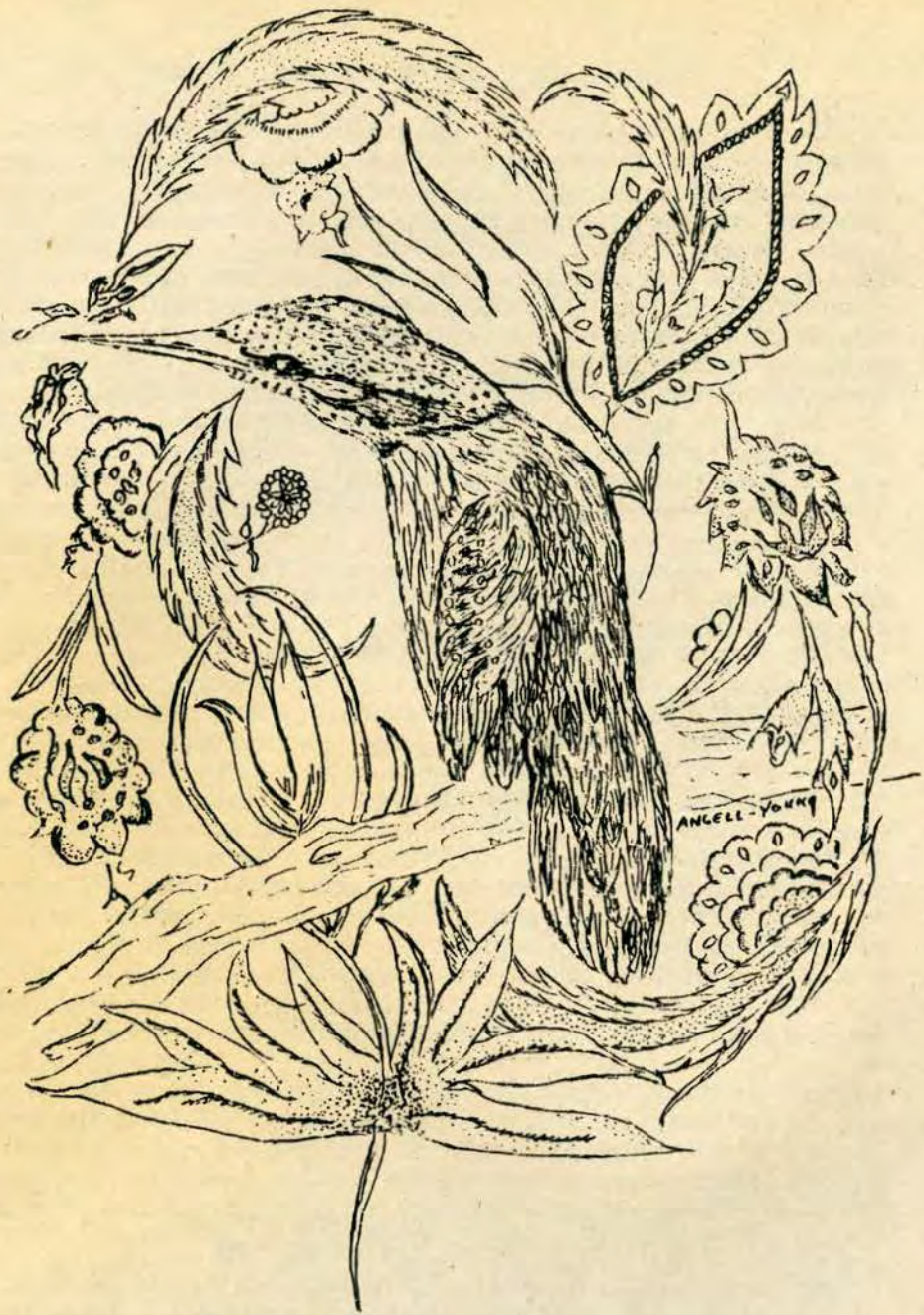
Now, I thought, he's hittin' below the belt. It's as if our camaraderie meant absolutely nothin' to him. As if I didn't e'en exist. The guy's obviously gone loony, I thought. He seemed to be mockin' me, and he still dug deeper.

"Each man would have me livin' some degenerate life," he rambled on, "and if it ain't on some old beat up farm, it's on the bottle. Why should I work eighteen hours a day breakin' my back to make some snarlin' rancher rich?! Even if things do get better, I want no part of 'em. This world, and we made it this way, ain't fit for no human being who cares about what happens to it or the people in it. I know when the day of reckonin' comes, I'll suffer for what I'm sayin' and doin', but at least I'll know I wasn't no workin' organism helpin' to quicken the inevitable outcome of this cruel, useless world!"

When he finished, I couldn't do nothin' but stare at him, my mouth gaped wide open. I musta looked real dumb and foolish. But I didn't have nothin' to say, right there and then. Well, I coulda told him a few things off the top of my head. After all, the guy just called me a lousy drunkard. But I just kept my mouth closed, figurin' he knew what he wanted better than I did. So what did I do? I extended my hand and wished him luck.

I didn't give him much thought for a long time afterward neither. I was kinda sore at him, with his sudden highfalutin attitude 'bout life. Who'd he think he was anyway, I thought, a damn saint?

Maria Argano



October Sun

I face the October Sun
and gather its warmth.
I savor it
And frame it
In my cooling mind.
The last drop from the glass
Until April.

John Kraus

They say
the way
to sail uncharted seas
is find a constant star.

I chose the Sun
and you!
surviving Storms
with your Remembered Light.

I am a private person
who cautiously reveals
a secret soul...
Aching for Freedom,
denying pain,
and straining
at bonds that would ensnare me.

Mist and Maelstrom
would belie Serenity
but for you,
my gentle, Constant Star...

A firefly
adores you
from a distance,
enraptured by your Light.

Jennifer Langner

Parfois je sens exister enferme comme un chien.
Je me couche par terre et ne fais jamais rien.
Je découvre par hasard que je ne suis pas du tout heureux,
Je me demande pourquoi! C'est tout ce que je fais est ennuyeux.

Il me manque mortellement des choses d'aventure et d'amour.
Il n'y a rien de beau ni laid qui m'entoure.
Je me souviens maintenant de bons temps à Paris,
Ou tout était beau et laid, et sans souci.

J'y trouvai une ange merveilleuse d'amour éternel et passionné.
Mais, il me fallait partir, je ne pouvais pas la quitter.
C'est ici, dans le nouveau monde une fois le rêve des grands aventuriers,
D'ou mon amour je te regarde et t'attends, frustré.

W. Lewis

ONE MAN'S JOURNEY THROUGH DESPAIR

He raised his glass in a silent toast to an empty room as the lonely silence of another night crept stealthily in, contemptuously mocking his solitude, depriving him of any hope of a reprieve. The candle flame flickered in the darkened room, beckoning him over the edges of his sanity, taunting him, haunting him, and daring him to forget. A shudder passed through his fear-wracked body as the flame did a grotesque dance of death before his eyes. The Grim Reaper and a host of satyrs had come to be paid. His soul despaired his memory's regrets just as the shadows in the room denied the light of the flame. Vengeful ghosts from the past had arrived for this lasting and final torture. He knew he'd arrived at his own personal hell. In the chaotic nightmare of his tortured mind, he remembered.

In unrelenting detail, each vision stepped out of the flame, inflicting its pain and branding his body to the depths of his soul. At first, they were shadowed, but as they stated their claim, the visions became clearer, and he knew each by name.

Out of the flames came a little boy: Tommy, his classmate whom he had hated in school. He had made sure all the other kids hated him too. Tommy remembered the time he was tripped on the stairs; he was a visitor of revenge. The man watched the bizarre scene unfold before his own eyes; there was an endless staircase that he had to climb. As he climbed each stair, he was pushed back by an incredible weight, and Tommy laughed as the man crawled up the stairs, one by one. Just as he'd reached the final stair, the vision changed and he was back in his chair.

The heartbroken face of a young girl appeared in the room and the sounds of her sobs were like the sounds of doom. The man covered his ears but the sounds invaded his mind, each heart-rending sob echoing from the corners of the room. As the sobbing grew louder, the man's sadness increased and he thought he would die from the depths of his despair. The sounds started to fade and the man thought it was over, but the Grim Reaper laughed in the corner and said, "It's only just started."

The man sat in his chair and stared straight ahead.

The Grim Reaper said, "You must look into the flame and see your life pass before your eyes."

As the man looked into the flame and the flame hypnotized him, out stepped all the people he had stepped on during his journey to the top. There was Harry and Joe and Beth, and they'd waited for this time to pay him back for being used as pawns. To his horror, he watched the three grow in size, till he was no more than the size of a toad. They picked him up and placed him in a cage with a giant spider. As the spider stalked him, he ran straight into its web and was captured in its lair; he was its pawn. The spider moved in, ready for the kill. The man was utterly helpless and he screamed for mercy. The candle flickered and the vision disappeared.

The shadows lengthened, and out of the darkness stepped his two children. He was so overjoyed at seeing them that he ran forward to meet them. But they kept moving back, away from him, as he kept pursuing them. And as he followed, they moved farther and farther away. They led him straight into a labyrinth. Road upon road, turn upon turn. Suddenly, his children were gone, and he was quite lost. He screamed after them, but they were gone; they had left him all alone just as he had left them. He sat down and he cried. He had lost more than his direction. The tears became flames and he was back in the room.

He sat in the burnished chair and watched the candle burn, and he knew that he had treated life like melted wax. He had let so many things pass by him and he had used so many people, and now he was worth no more than useless wax. Through his actions, he had caused all the light to go out of his life. As the candle flame flickered and flew away, and the room was overwhelmed by total darkness, the man finally knew the true depths of despair.

Theresa Pearce

Buffalo Station

So it begins

Vast asphalt
 abandoned crumbling
Once collector of cars
Now collector of one
Few or none

Empty

Over stately doorways
their seldom use
Gothic columns
pillars
Supporting the pallid past
The heralds of hindsight
Beyond the doors

Empty

Mosaic monuments to absent feet
Cold tile
Buffalo cold
Bordered by ticket windows
In rows like dominoes
Would fall were they not

Above them names
of towns that sound
Empty

Chicago is hollow
If no one goes
no one goes

Midwest men's room signs
are dusty
here and there
guarded by disuse
and white porcelain sentinels
saluting with silver handles
facing each other
and the

Empty
as the burgundy draped dining room
waiting for debutantes
with an expectant elegance
disappeared three decades ago

Empty

bar once big and boisterous
with spinning heads and laughter
now long and lonely
spins the spider
empty

the waiting room the Cathedral
stained glass
palatial ceilings
and pews to permit
the congregation of St. Peter's
once
now sits one
felt hat hands and newspaper
wondering what to worship

all empty

the rails beyond

miles of musical measures
orchestrating the thunder
 of a thousand engines empty
now ribbons of rust
someone must
know where they go
no one does
no one goes
the one
the train
passing this way
is a stray

the Gateway to the West
rusted shut

the Gateway to the West
rusted shut

so it ends

Jim Slater