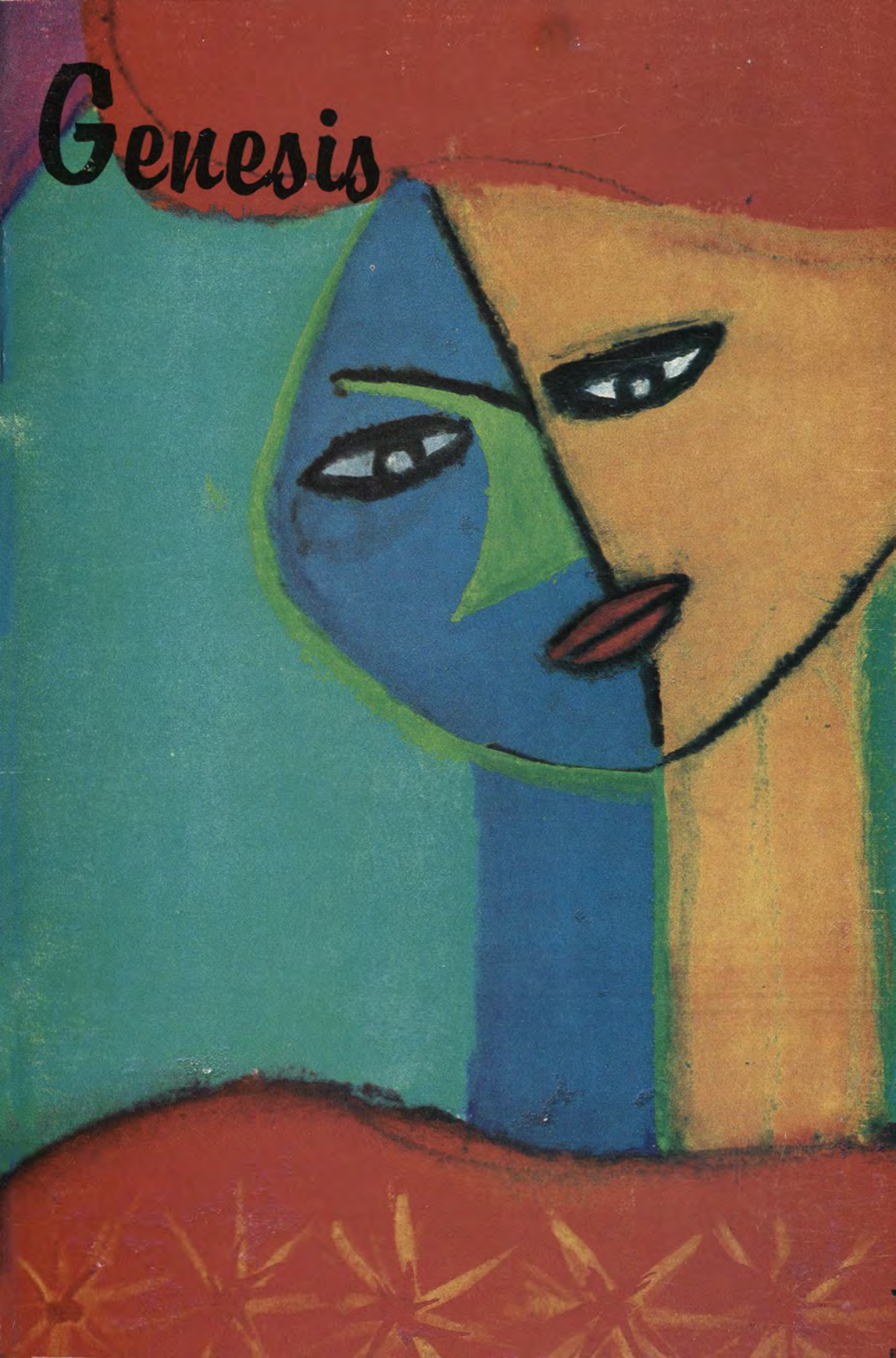
Genesis



INVITATION TO ARTISTS AND AUTHORS

Artwork is invited from all persons who have been students at IUPUI at any time during the last eighteen months prior to submission. Any type of artwork may be submitted. Artists are asked to submit no more than ten pieces for a given issue. If possible, please submit photographed artwork in either color or black and white. Arrangements for the return of artwork not photographed will be made following publication. Please identify each piece on the back with its title and your name, address, phone number, and a short biography. Artists will be notified as to acceptance prior to publication. Submit work to Genesis, care of the Herron Assistant Dean's Office or Geneva Ballard in the English department, Cavanaugh Hall.

Manuscripts are invited from all persons who have been students at IUPUI at any time during the last eighteen months prior to submission. Manuscripts of essays, fiction, non-fiction, or poetry, on any topic, may be submitted at any time to Genesis, care of Geneva Ballard in the English Department, Cavanaugh Hall. All manuscripts are considered by a student editorial board. Authorship is not revealed to the board until a manuscript has been accepted.

Manuscripts must be typed; prose pieces should be double-spaced. Please classify prose pieces as either fiction or non-fiction. Poets are asked to submit no more than ten pieces for a given issue. All submissions must be accompanied by a separate title sheet containing the author's name, address, telephone number, and a short biography. Names should be on the title sheet only, and not on the manuscript.

Authors whose material has been accepted will be notified prior to publication date. Manuscripts will not be returned. Any manuscripts submitted too late for the current deadline will be considered for the next issue. Honorary prizes are awarded at the discretion of the editors for the outstanding entry in each of the categories of art, essay, fiction, and poetry. Members of the editorial board are ineligible to receive prizes.

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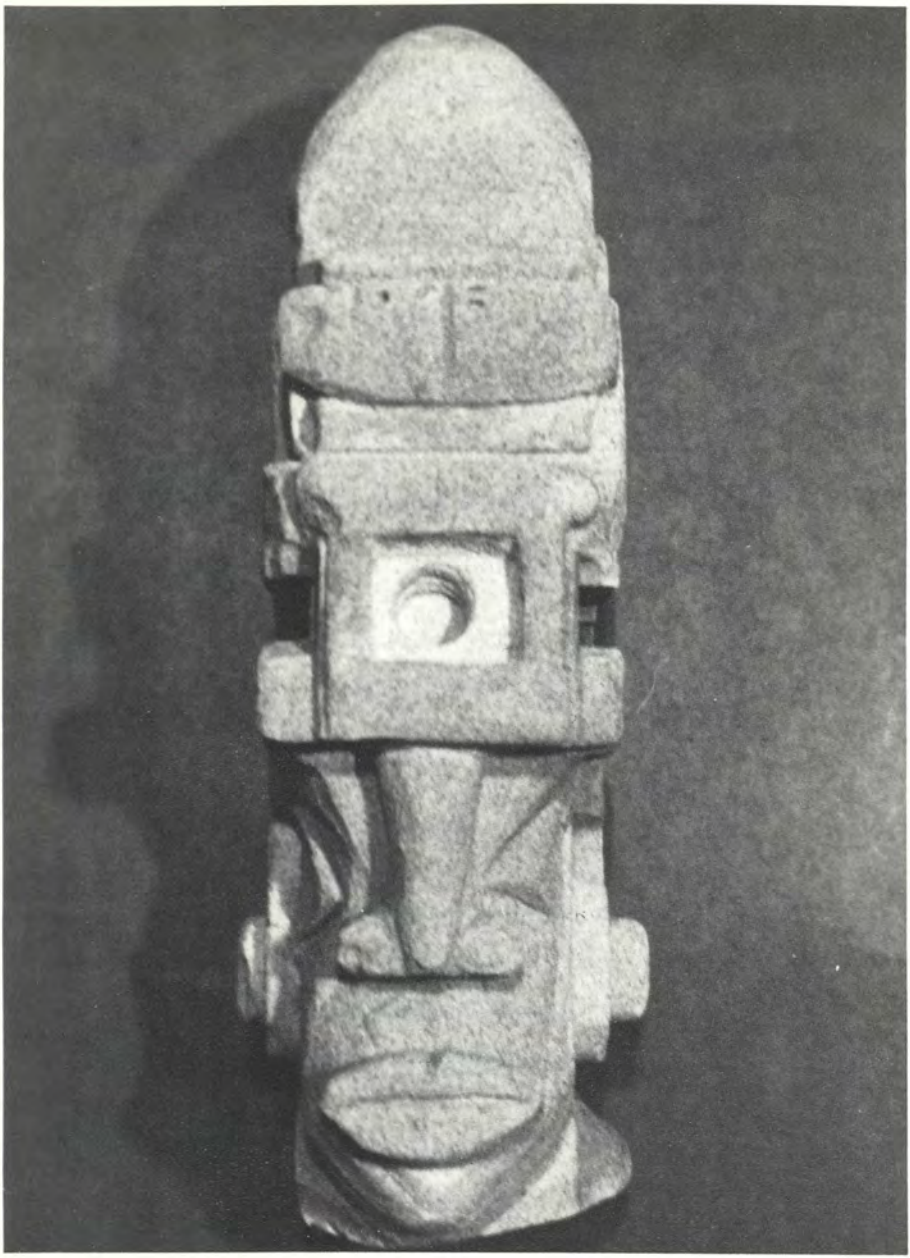


I exist in the cell. In the house of the cell, I exist as DNA. I exist as the history of life. I exist as all of the microcosmos which joins to form me. There is infinity within me.

Michael Jackson

Lipstick Kids

by Peter S. Monn

"Ruby darling!" In my dream, it was my mother who was calling for me. Her see-through white dress swam around her feet in the currents of a rippling stream. "Ruby! Time to get up!" Actually it was just Rose, screaming, not calling for me, over crackling bacon and her Jesus music.

Reaching for my glasses, I knocked over a glass of water, and then stepped in the puddle as my feet stepped out from under the sheets onto the wood floor. It was only seven. Usually I slept in until ten or eleven on Saturdays.

"Ruby! Time to get up. Don't make me come up there and drag your bum out of bed."

"I comin', I'm comin'." I muttered under my breath before sticking my four day old gum into my mouth, trying to grasp for any flavor left in the tiny piece of Juicy Fruit.

Rose tossed two pieces of bacon, and a slice of buttered toast on my plate before I have even sat down. Rose had already showered and dressed. Her hair was perfectly set, and her make-up, although almost unsightly colors, was perfectly placed on her face. Her left hand was flipping the bacon while her right hand was wiping the crumbs from the counter into the sink. I sighed and ran my fingers through my choppy short hair.

"Now Ruby, I told you to go and get ready. Try to make yourself look nice. Do something, for God's sake, with your hair."

"Grandma . . ."

"Never Grandma darling, always Rose, you know that."

"Why the hell are we up so early?"

"Do NOT use that language in my house. You are though, going to see your mother today. She's in town and she wants to see you."

Momma had come to pick us up! For nine years I had been waiting to show everyone she really loved us, and now she was here!

I ran up the stairs before Rose could say another thing. Turning the corner to my room, I fell over something in the dark hall.

"Oh, it's you." I said, staring down at my little sister.

"See Lippy," she said, staring down at a tube of lipstick, "She's excited about seeing Momma too." She skipped down the hall and into her room.

Rummaging through my closet, I found a shirt of my father's and a new pair of cords to wear. Looking into the chipped mirror, I tried brushing my hair down, but decided to just slick it back. I fell into the seat, depressed that I couldn't be better looking. It was my curse in life to be a woman, yet representative of the male gender.

"Oh, Daddy." I sighed, looking at his picture under the mirror. I could remember one seriously happy moment about my father. He had taken me to the fair. He put me on some kind of ride, a carousel, and just let me keep riding and riding. Every time I'd go around I'd wave to him, and say "One more time, please, one more time," After about five more times, I raised my arm to wave, but he wasn't there. I took the picture out of the frame and slipped it into my pocket. In the new town where Momma was taking us, I would show all of the kids that I really did have a daddy. The picture was my way of living with him every day, not just remembering how he left without saying goodbye.

Momma was another story. She just packed all of her things, told Rose she was never meant to be a mother and drove off in her red pick up truck. Red had always been her favorite color. That's why she named me Ruby. And also because that had been the song on the radio when she believed I was conceived.

Momma didn't name my sister. She was gone before she had time. Rose started calling her Mary. "Blessed Mary," she'd say, but I knew my sister was a fool. She was nine years old, never wore anything except for pink, and she would only talk to this tube of lipstick. I guess that's why she goes to a special school. The lipstick is the only thing Momma left behind.

"Ruby, come on, it's time for you to go and meet your mother!"

Rose didn't have time to drive us to the bar where we were meeting Momma. So we had to walk to the bus station in front of Judy Acres' house. There's something about living on a street for so long that everybody knows everything about you even when you don't want them to. Sometimes, when school's been really bad, you jump off the bus, excited to be home, but the stupid street

reminds you that no matter how hard you try, you'll always be the same person, always.

"Where y'all going?" It was Judy, in her new rabbit fur coat, although it was the middle of August.

"Nowhere!" I shouted. "Why dontcha' go and mind your own business?"

"Well, I never. You know Ruby, that's your problem. You're never nice to anyone. Well that, and your mother is a whore." She shouted and ran in the house.

"Well, she's come to get us!" I shouted, but Judy had already slammed the door.

I guess the bus is even worse than your own street. If you have somewhere to go, then you can't get off whenever you want. Most kids my age buy cigarettes and magazines. At least that's what most kids at fifteen do. When I have extra money from working at the Frosty Banana, I like to get on the bus, and when it gets too hot, or too noisy, I just get off at the next stop.

Today though, we had to stay on the bus. Mary just sat there and talked to the stupid tube of lipstick, attracting stares from everyone. "Can you please stop that, God!"

"See, Lippy, she's embarrassed too." Hello, my sister is nine years old and talks to lipstick. Hello, I'm fifteen and just because I look like James Dean everyone calls me a butch dyke. The fact is I wish I could look prettier. I wish I looked like Momma. Well, I wish I looked like what Momma looks like in the picture I have of her.

The only picture we have is the one I rescued before Rose burnt them all. It's a picture of Momma wrapped around a pole, dressed in a bikini. She's a topless dancer. That's what she does in the carnival. The newspaper did a story about five years back called "Residents of Loaka County Gone Bad." That's how everyone found out about Momma, but she isn't a whore, she just isn't. She's just developed, the way I wish I was.

My head hit the seat in front of me and my glasses slid off as the bus came to a halt. I got myself back together and grabbed my sister's arm.

"Come on, we're here."

"Why couldn't Rose bring us?"

"I don't know. I think she had to go to church or something. Come on."

I had known my Daddy, at least for a little while. But Mary never had. I don't even think Momma knew for certain who her father was. Everybody said it was his fault that Mary was the way she was. What way? I'd ask, but everyone would just say the Mary was a gift from God. A gift from God! Pimples frosting her face. The worst shade of red hair possible, and she talks to lipstick. She may be a gift from God, but she is my personal hell.

"Come on." I said, smiling, trying to be a little nicer. She was all I had. Mary looked up and smiled back at me.

"Come on, Lippy, Momma's come to get us."

We sat in front of Bailey's Bar, which was where we were meeting Momma for almost an hour before some man in an apron come out and shouted at us.

"Hey! Hey you kids, are you looking for Arleen?"

"Yeah."

"Well, dammit kid, she's in here waiting for you. Been waiting for you." He slammed the door, and left us alone in the dusty parking lot.

The bar was a poop color brown, with no windows. After fifteen minutes more, I decided she wasn't going to come out and get us, so I held Mary's hand and together we walked in.

I wasn't sure why Momma hadn't come to see us at the house, especially since she would have to go back there to pick up our things. I was sure that she had changed her mind and was back to pick us up. It had been nine years and maybe she was ready to be our mother again.

The inside of the bar was dark with blue and red lights. The man who had shouted at us pointed to a corner away from the bar. I clenched Mary's hand tighter and walked over to the corner booth. She was there.

Her hair fell past her breasts in curling clouds of powdery snow. She had on a black leather tank top exposing the size of her breasts, but hid her eyes behind mirrored sunglasses.

"Hi . . . uh, Momma?"

"Never Momma, always Arleen."

She smiled, and I tried, I really tried to smile back. This wasn't the woman I remembered. Our Momma had been so young, and so beautiful. She took off her sunglasses to reveal puffy eyes, with sores around the edges.

"How have you girls been, it's been so long?"

"We're fine, I guess."

"Lippy, I don't think that's our Momma. It doesn't look like the woman on the pole."

"What the fuck is wrong with her." She hissed, pointing one of her long fingers, sharpened on the end into what I would call a perfectly Cruella DeVille fingernail.

"What do you mean? That's just, well, that's just Mary. She's a gift from God."

The lady before us began to laugh harder than anyone I had ever seen laugh. "Gift from God?!" She hissed again, blowing smoke all over the table. "She's a God damned retard." Mary just kept on smiling. If she didn't understand, I sure did. "Let me tell you something, Ruby. Her father got me drunk, and then took advantage of me."

"I thought you didn't know who . . . "

"Yeah well anyway, let me get a look at you girls," she said softer, putting her sunglasses back on while lighting another cigarette. I looked at the brand, Eves, and decided I would only smoke that brand when I got older.

Mary could stay with Rose. I would go with Arleen, and we would smoke and do our nails together. We would be a team.

"Now the reason I wanted to see you girls today, well really I only need to see you Ruby." I knew it. She had decided to take me and leave stupid old Mary behind.

"The reason is that I need you to sign these papers to prove that I really am your momma. See, I got some money I need to get, and well, you don't need to know the 'spefics." She reached for her glass, but realized it was empty. "Hey Bailey, how about another Jack and Coke, and uhh . . . " She looked over at us, "And two sodas."

"Sign some papers. But don't you want to take me with you, I mean . . . "

"What? Hey, wait a minute." She began to adjust her breasts, pulling them up, pushing them over.

"Well, isn't that what your, I mean, you can leave her, just take me, don't you want me?"

The drinks came, and Arleen finished hers without a breath. "Just one more, please." She said, showing her stained teeth while smiling at Bailey.

Some music came on, and for a while we sat and just listened, drinking our drinks. It was Gloria Gayner's "I Will Survive." The music was playing over the sound of pool balls striking each other and Arleen was blowing smoke in my face, taking me in under her sunglasses. I vowed I would never forget this moment.

I noticed that she wasn't wearing any red, not a stitch. And then I noticed she was looking at Mary.

"So what's with the lipstick biz?"

Mary held out the tube to Arleen. She took it from her hand, careful not to touch Mary, and unwound the tube, looking at the color, testing it in the light.

"It was the only thing you left behind. I guess it's her way of remembering you."

"Well, now. Isn't that precious," she said, still examining the tube. "But it isn't my color. It wouldn't go with my act, or my uniform." She kept staring at the lipstick. "I do kind of remember wearing this color though. But that was a long time ago." She handed, almost threw, the lipstick back to Mary.

"Don't you even want it? She wants you to have it!" I was almost screaming. Mary just sat there, holding the tube out to Arleen, who was just chugging down her drink with one hand, and motioning to the bartender with the other hand. Her hand, holding the glass, flew down on the table, taking Mary's arm with it.

"I said I don't want the God damn lipstick. Give it to Rose. It's more her color anyway. She likes red, doesn't she? But make sure you don't wear it. You hear me?"

I nodded.

"It'll just mess up your life. Once you put it on, you're a different person, and everyone thinks you are, so just don't put it on." She reached into her purse and grabbed some legal looking papers.

"O.K. I don't really want to rush things, but I got a show in Chalkat county tonight, so I really gotta go."

She handed me a pen which, when turned upside down, showed a man with no clothes on. If you held it up again the man had on bikini underwear. I signed where she pointed, and handed the pen back to her.

Mary held out the tube again.

"What's her name again?"

I couldn't believe she didn't remember her name. "Mary."

"Oh yeah, well Mary honey, I don't like that color. It's not my shade, O.K?"

Mary continued to hold out the lipstick.

"It's time for us to go," I said.

"Oh yeah?" She hissed looking at her watch. "Well, you girls stay good, y'all hear."

Standing up, I took Mary's hand and walked out of the bar.

When we got off of the bus, I looked over at Judy's house. I wasn't sure that everyone on the street did know everything about me. I looked over at Mary.

"Where's your tube of lipstick?" She just looked at me and smiled. Maybe she wasn't as stupid as I thought. We walked down the street, and I stepped on the same cracks that I stepped on every day. I felt some comfort knowing they were still there, and probably always would be.

When we got home, Mary ran upstairs and slammed her door. Rose came running from the kitchen at the sound of the slammed door. She brought the smell of Tollhouse cookies and coffee into the room with her.

"What's wrong? How is your mother?"

I just stared at her and didn't know what to say.

"Ruby? What's wrong? I made some cookies. Do you want some? They're warm."

I kept staring at her.

"Ruby?" she said.

She smelled like Charlie perfume. The perfume I had given her last Christmas.

"Yeah, cookies would be real nice," I said. Rose smiled and walked into the kitchen.

As I started up the stairs to my bedroom, I started to cry, but why, I wasn't entirely sure. I was mad, not just because of my mother, but because I looked like a boy.

I would probably never look good in lipstick.

Collected Poems of Allen Ginsberg

by Robert Geistwhite

Red-white-black
Book of Bee-Bop
Bearded Buddha
Stuck suck up
Capitol Hole

Hold tight on
Tight teenie
Teenage breasts
Beat bare
Against the wall

Bring back
The Bing-Bong
Bongo song
Sung strong
Into the wind

Flip-Flop
Flippity
Diddity Dat
As the lovesick youths
Lap at the loins
of a queer prophetic pen

Untitled

by Jeff Mitchell

It's been a pretty long time now since men have been writing books, sharing their experiences so that other guys can read about it and get some sort of shared knowledge for the common good. That's what I'm doing. Now, I know that you ladies may feel a bit slighted, but for a pretty long time I think that you couldn't read or something. Or maybe you couldn't write. I don't know, it was one of those.

Anyway, I'm going to share my experience with you, the reader, in hopes that something I have seen or done may be of service to you.

For moi, there are probably several aspects that contribute the most to making my life extraordinary. I've got the best little woman that a guy could ever hope for, although she has been acting a little weird lately. I've got a great career that allows me to live a lifestyle just a little above the common element. I don't mean to sound conceited or anything but it is true. And I have a high intellectual capacity. I was born with the ability to absorb knowledge at a much greater rate than the common man.

I try pretty hard not to take these gifts for granted because they are so special. I just have to remind myself at times that I bear the cross of being one of the few cerebral giants. I must use it only for the good of all men. And women too, of course.

Now, dear reader, wise and venerable guardian of truth, I pose a question to you. What would you think if your woman constantly spoke in cryptic messages? Things like "You're wasting my time." It's so frustrating at times. Why can't she just come out and say what she means? Of course, I can always tell what she's thinking, sometimes it just takes a while.

That's not the only one of her little coded messages either. There have been others. Like, for instance, "You're making me sick," or "You're just not enough."

I happen to be an intellectual type of guy. I'm cosmopolitan. Hell, I dress just like the guys do in the Sears and JC Penny catalogues, except for my super hip Oakley Wrap-Around Shades with neon-colored lenses. Those are my own addition to the style

machine that I am.

Anyway, her new method of conveying her hidden feelings to me are confusing. I'd hate to say that it is beyond my grasp, but, I don't know, to hell with it! . . .

These problems with my woman though, I don't know. They just began recently. To protect her anonymity, I'll call her "Malcolm X" but she really has a different name. She's always been a feisty little bitch, but I sense that something is just not quite right. Of course I love her to death and she does have so many fine qualities, but my deductive powers just tell me that something deep inside of her is amiss. I think that I can help her figure it out.

For example, we were at a restaurant recently, and I was buying, by the way. We were sitting in a booth, when all of a sudden, WHAM!, she just slapped me right on the side of the head. There I was, chewing on a huge bite of my Big Mac and telling her how I thought that she should cut her hair because, well, it does look pretty stupid now, I'm sure that you'd agree with me if you could see it, but anyway, she just slapped me. I was pretty mad. I said to her, "Ouch Damn you!" or something like that but she didn't say anything back so I just finished my sandwich and thought about it.

That was a pretty eye-opening event for moi, I must say. I look at her in an entirely different way now. Of course, like I said, I love the hell out of the little bitch but she did hit me pretty hard. That must be her way of showing affection. Sometimes people just can't open up the way that I do. They have to find other ways to express their emotions. My mother always told me that I was born with a special talent to bring out emotions in people that they didn't know existed. My woman must really love me. A simple hug or kiss just isn't a grand enough gesture. She feels so much stronger about me than a token display of affection could possibly hope to exhibit. I am so lucky, I have found true love.

There are so many lovable qualities that my woman has, I couldn't even imagine where to start. For starters, she's concerned about the well-being of those around her. Just last week, for example, a friend of mine was having a bad day. She took him out to a bar and then spent three consecutive nights consoling him and working through his pain. She didn't have to do it, but she did. Anyway, I admired her altruism but she was real modest about the whole thing. She was just like one of those ordinary heroes that

they profile on those excellent real life docudramas on television. She just said that it gave her a feeling of true fulfillment to help him out. And he's about as happy as I've seen him in a long time, so whatever that little pep talk she gave him was, it sure did work. For me, things usually always go my way, so I don't get depressed like that. You could just say that I was born lucky.

I do have to say that it's not all luck that got me where I am today, it was a lot of hard work too.

When I go to work in the morning, people show nothing but the highest respect for me. They know! I mean I am the head mixer at the Porter Paints store here in town. I'm making eight dollars an hour now and in another two years it'll probably be up to nine. That's some pretty damn good money. It's been a pretty bitter, struggling climb to the top, but like they say, anything that is worthwhile is hard to attain.

Sometimes mixing those paints all day can cause a person to be a little light headed. They have these special masks that they want us to wear, but I say no way. Masks are for sissys and queers. I didn't get into the position that I'm in now by being a sissy. When I feel woozy and nauseous, I just take a little break and go get high or something.

Of course, I don't advocate the use of narcotics or anything, especially not to children, but I started getting high when I was a kid and it hasn't harmed me any. I'll just go sneak back by the dumpster and fire up. Sometimes I'll have a laugh at those bums that hang out by the liquor store, across the street because they're such losers and I'm not, but sometimes I'll just go and join them for a snort. I like to reach out to the common people. I'm extremely sensitive to the plight of those minorities. They just weren't born with the advantages of a person like me so I guess it's no wonder that they do that stuff. Although they don't want to work, they just want to collect welfare and fuck.

I do the best job of anybody here at Porter Paints. Most people realize that too. Although I'm at the top of the pyramid back in the warehouse, I like to think that we're all just one big happy family. A work family. I'm just like the patriarch. I give advice to the other guys when they need it. They don't even have to ask for it. I can just sense their angst sometimes when I'm around and I like to do what I can to help them out with their problems. See, I'm just here to help people, and they appreciate that. Sometimes we get

the college kids in here doing their summer jobs and those are the ones that I like to help the most. I tell them "You don't need college. I didn't go to school and look at me, I'm just fine. Who needs to learn Latin anyway. Nobody here in America speaks it and I don't think that you're going to be going to Latin America or wherever it is they speak it anytime soon, are you buddy?" They usually just laugh and agree with me and then I make a little mental note to myself that I've successfully helped another young person. That's all I'm here for, to help people.

The reason why I didn't need to go to some college is because of my superior intellectual skills. My IQ is pretty high. I've never actually had it tested but I know that it would just confirm my thoughts. I mean, I know all the state capitals. Sometimes I get the Dakotas mixed up though. Hell, I can even do math in my head. The kind of math that is important. Adding and subtracting and that kind of stuff. I can spell big words without sounding them out first. That is just the basic stuff though.

My real abilities lie in my keen understanding of the human mind. See, I know what people think, I can read people's body language. I can divine the hidden messages behind what is being said. Of course, I'm having a bit of a problem with my little woman at the moment, but I'll break that code sure enough.

I have a perceptive intuition that allows me to look at situations for being far greater than what they really are. I guess you could say that I get the big picture, the grand scheme. Most people don't. No offense meant to you reader, just in case you're part of the multitude that is in the inferior category to moi; remember, I was born with a special talent. Sure, it's a skill that some people can definitely refine, but I've worked through the awkward stage already. It really just boils down to it being a congenital trait.

Let me begin with an example. Me, nine years ago, an upstart, in ingenue, I liked to refer to myself as a Menso debutante, confronted with a situation. My girl at the time, I'll call her Marlena, that's not her real name, I just say this because an old girl of mine went through an eerily similar situation and her name was Marlena.

Well, anyway, it had nothing to do with the intellectually dwarfed, wicked, hateful, spiteful, lying cheating, bitch of an old girlfriend. This girl gets pregnant. Instantly, my deductive powers are set to working. It works that way with me, that's the special

gift part, I'm thinking, 'Wow , I've not slept with her, how did that happen? So, since she was my girlfriend and I didn't get her pregnant, it must have been one of those divine births. An immaculate conception. The Lord God impregnated MY girlfriend.' It seemed like an honor. Luckily I quickly realized that further investigation may be warranted. When I asked her if God had fathered her child she said she thought that it was God at the time but it turned out to be a taxi driver with a hairy back. Further inquiries revealed later that she was basically stricken with delusional fantasies that were manifested in sleeping with men that she believed were God. The poor girl.

I've always been able to recover quickly from those situations though. When it comes to dealing with women, I'm the one who's in charge. I wear the pants. I give 'em my motto right off the bat. Don't mother me, don't smother me, and don't bother me. Of course, when I say it out loud, the "bother" part sounds like buther and so they usually don't understand what I'm talking about . . . but, Oh well.

I just let them know right aways that I'm smarter and I'm the man, so I'm the boss. Then I'll throw in some of my frighteningly extensive knowledge of trivia and there you have it, they're usually speechless. Or sometimes they might have a thought but be too overwhelmed to express it all so an incomplete sentence comes out, something like "Whatever . . . " and then they can't go on anymore. I just finish out the sentence for them . . "Else might you know O Smart Man."

I do have strong deductive powers.

him

by David Savidge

It was one of those chance college encounters that one rarely remembers, and yet for some reason I did. Three of us were there at the time waiting for one of those notoriously slow elevators in the teacher's college . . . three of us and him. He was waiting, too, but he sat as we waited. His legs were so short that they had to have atrophied. His trunk was normal size as was his head . . .but his hands? His hands were permanently perpendicular to his forearms, and his thumbs jutted awkwardly from his palm. His hands clutched . . . no . . .they were positioned around the levers on his wheel chair.

The door opened, and the three of us went in . . . the three of us and him. He headed to the back of the elevator. I stood holding the door open, waiting for him to turn around. He didn't. He sat facing the back wall. I wondered how he felt. Did he know that the three of us were staring?

The elevator started and stopped too quickly. I looked up . . . second floor. I heard an, "Escuse me," and he deftly backed his wheel chair out of the elevator. The doors closed.

The three of us were left. We didn't look at each other. We were thinking.

I noticed that my athlete's foot began to itch: it felt good.

The door opened on the fourth floor, and I got off.

Loneliness and Saxophones

by John Matthew

I sit, blessed by the similarities in form between myself and the chair. We have a love relationship—myself and the chair—sometimes the window visits when the sun is out. Like any relationship, ours has grown, if not sour, at least dusty over time. I am tired of the window and the chair, the chair in pious silence sits formed and worn of the pattern of myself. I go.

I go.

The stairs down to the street are darkly subtle, peeling paint and pockmarked wood dotted with cobwebs and spiders disguised by the absence of light. The spiders who call the stairway home must live generation to generation in blissful anonymity without the idea of a sun, or dew glistening off the web in the morning light in the elevated haunts.

The door to the street at the bottom of the stairs is the completion of the stairs, a way down and a way off the place the spiders and I call a home. When I'm out the door to the street, the stairs, the spiders, the window, and the chair must sigh and sleep a bit or do what unnoticed things do when left alone.

The streets are empty except for myself.

Emptiness is not silence, the city sings its song while the people sleep. I walk unnoticed, the city cannot notice me or silence would descend like fog softening the harsh lines of domino buildings standing like the thousand stone Chinese soldiers awaiting the repeace of reburial.

But there is no fog, only a crystal clarity of dark zirconian vision in which sparkles a light. Like a zombie I walk towards the lit window, a pawn shop window, a nest of stories of the importance placed upon the heads of stuffed bears, typewriters, guns, a stereo. Saxophones hang from the window of the shop, there is a

crime of silence happening amongst the city noises of the street light's hum and the neon's buzz, noises so everywhere as to sound the sound of nowhere. I think the saxophones in the window need a friend, a lover, a soul to place upon their curved forms, touching the right places to make melody to make sound out of the gleaming sterile brass.

I know you sax. I feel for you sax.

I walk, listening to the hum of the neon and streetlight citysong backed by the one-two, one-two beat of my imbecile feet skittering the gravel. The gravel now has a song.

The gravel's song is soon eclipsed by a man sitting on a bench outside a closed bar with drumsticks and a rubber pad plowing his till in the field of beat.

I stop, I listen, his beat is there for me to feel, looming in my head because he knows nothing of me, I am a part of the silence, he does not see me, looking straight ahead beyond the city, feeling his beat go.

I walk more of the city streets, the mainstream paths of convergence from doorways, from sidewalks, from side streets, from alleys.

I find an alley. I hear noises, I hear saxophones. I see saxophone players lined down the alley, standing, or sitting on concrete dividers, spaced as so not to infringe on the existence of each other. The first plays a jazz bit up and down fast, played well. I see the notes, I feel the beat, the action-reaction of the beat, and the palette of colors created in the grey shadows of the city night by the horns. As I continue walking, the notes, the beat stays with me, then fades to the sounds of the next player coming into ear range. He plays a little blues on the horn, also well, smiling slightly through the reed in his mouth, and the curve of his horn is a smile born of the fusion of the man and the breath and the horn and the reed.

The smile is a child inside.

The coming and going of sounds from the different players lining the alley continues, I walk and listen.

I listen.

The musical motion of the alley is like sitting still on a wall on the weekends on the cruise strip pick-up lanes in the place of many paths listening to the car stereos of the cruisers, a sampler of life at large, the currents coming together born of raindrops, forming rivulets, making creeks, making streams, making rivers, resting in lakes, then flowing fast again making wide rivers, making oceans, making the clouds, making rain—falling drops feeding the rivulets, making the pitter-patter beat of the rain.

All goes on.

I kick a can, it be-bops across the concrete, I watch, listen.

I am the tin can in the street carried by the motors passing it by—dodging, dodging clattering a cityscene jazz beat, dancing a cityscene ballet to this beat until it lies flattened, silent and still, and in the end there is only the bundled shopping carts who continue the cycle taking up the still silenced for 3 cents a pound and on it goes.

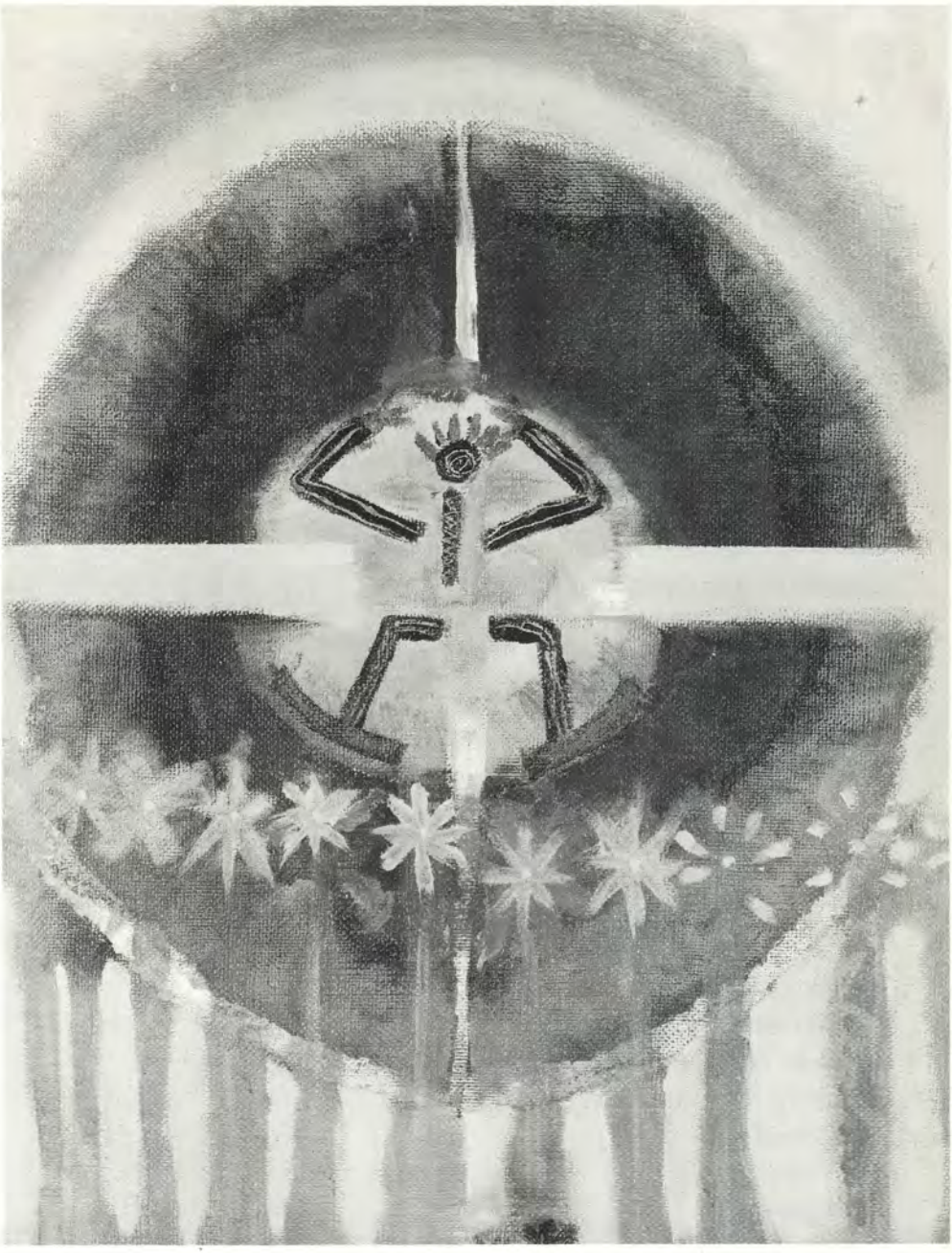
There are still more saxophones in the alley, still more dark blue sounds of dark blue horns in the dark blue night bounding off back alley walls, like thoughts in my head, only the sounds have no skull, no walls of bone or plaster filled with chairs and windows and more thoughts to limit their journey as they float off over the night.

The city needs saxophones.

I need saxophones. I need a moment of permanence. I am not a water drop, a tin can, I am no cycle, only a flash in the sun, a pebble in the gravel lot lying waiting for the kick, the tire, the unknowing foot to bring me alive to skitter across a lot making my own quiet beat.

A trickling echo wafts through the alley. The city welcomes the unnoise, speaking its piece again through the song of the neon, the dirge of the streetlights humming night stillness into dark corners of dark alleys where possums lurk.

I find myself home. The door, the stairs, my door, my chair, my window, all in silence, are still here. I sit.



The sun gives us life.
It knows nothing of us.
It lives its cycle and we live ours.
Michael Jackson

June 18, 1977

by Jeffrey Beebe

That morning,
I had set up the sprinkler
in the backyard to escape
the indolent heat . . .
under the web of the stock oak,
my grandfather's tree;
But tumbled mightily inside
upon the first tearing roil of thunder and
the touch of cool breezy tendrils.
Through the fly-smeared bay window,
and with a green-glass
bottle of root beer—my opiate
of summer—curled in my fist,
(my grandfather's drink)
I watched the cold pewter clouds coil
across the sky
distended with rain.
The old oak went
down with whipcrack cough
under the first violent slap
and agony of wind.
The leaves
sighed as its tired,
bent barrel was jarringly
caught in the crotch of the pale rain-slick beech
leaning over the garage.
(It saved our
car and
the garage
from the fall.)
My father ran out into the rain,
swearing through a sad face.

That afternoon,
when the flinty heat and mosquitos had doubled,

I played out back around the
gasping roots of the old oak.
(a narrow-chested child)
—sprinting through the rainbowing
mist of green lawn sprinkler,
leaves and twigs and bark and beetles
pulped beneath my numb feet.
(water cold
like an electric shock;
grass clippings
plastered to feet, ankles, and shins;
toes purple from clumsy stubbings and
knees clotted with brown scabs and new pink flesh—)
—tugging with raisin-fingers
on the wet curls
of my hair,
trying to straighten them out
before they frizzily dried in the sun.

Maxwell House, The Star, Ed (who I think was male), Christina, Jojo, Samuel, Bobby, Lisa, and Franklin

by Derek Tow

Worms panic when it rains
a half dozen crawling around
on the porch escaping death by drowning
Worms
Samuel, Lisa Franklin, Jojo, Bobby, and Christina
crawling too slowly to hold my interest
ditto the columns in print (what's up with ol'Clintone)

10 pass I check on the worms progress
another inch another 10 minutes

a swooper in the corner of my eye black kamikaze
soaring gracefully silently inches from ground
diving and climbing diving and climbing
I named him Ed

I assumed it was a he although I have very little knowledge in the field
of swooping black birds
and though it may be a bit sexist
it just looked like a he for whatever reason

caffeine addictions desire more fuel
which my cup could no longer provide
I grew to fetch another

suddenly Ed swooped down just shy of my loose socks
and locked his mighty jaws around Franklin's head
having nothing of this Lisa tied her slimy
body around Franklin

Sam, Jojo, Bobby, and Christina
(who also goes by Chris but she prefers Christina because she says
it's
more mature and she considers herself a mature classy worm)
followed Lisa's lead gripping Franklin
with all they could muster

Ed pulled the six nearly a foot
before flipping heels over head onto concrete
a new band of worms appeared from around the grass line
crawled onto the porch towards the havoc

helpless Ed could only lie watching the army centimeter
towards him at .00783 mph.
another inch another 10 minutes
Franklin suffered only slight abrasions to his noggin
the others enjoyed breakfast

sometimes the early worm gets the bird

Homo-ludinous came to dinner

Michael Jackson

A Gift From God

by Mark A. Curtis

It all started when they saw the red glow coming from the hills. Chano never saw the fire.

"Please, dear sir, help us find the treasure."

The man appeared to be a Gypsy. Chano could not tell because it was a very dark night and the candle was small, but he could see that his clothes were torn and he smelled. Even in the poor light Chano observed that the man was dirty. Not dirt after a day's work, but dirt that had been left unwashed for days, maybe weeks. An adult figure, bent over holding something and covered by a blanket, waited in a wagon hitched to a mule. The mule stood silent, patient, like it had been through this before.

"There is no treasure," Chano replied.

"Please, dear sir, help us dig. No, I will dig. You are the one who can find the source of the red fire."

"Who told you to come here?"

He rubbed the brim of his straw hat which he gripped in his hands since he stepped off the wagon. Chano held the weak candle near his face. For a moment Chano wondered if he knew him. His skin was dark from the sun and deep ruts lined his forehead and the sides of his mouth: it was a hungry face—empty. His eyes looked away, not at any object in their surroundings, but at nothing. They resembled brown marbles clouded with a sickly white film. Cataracts, Chano determined. Then the man looked up into the flame and the cloudiness faded and a sparkle supplanted the dull stare. Chano knew that it was temporary. Cataracts do not go away.

"The people of the village," he answered. "They said you would know."

Chano's adobe house bordered the south edge of the town of El Faro and the desert. To the north the state capital, Chihuahua, positioned in the valley of the Sierra Madres Occidental, bustled with business like the torrents racing through the dry gullies in the spring; to the south lay the desert and the mountains.

"All you will find is dust and rocks."

The man's mouth opened larger than usual and his eyebrows bent down in a puzzled gaze.

"The Spanish treasure," he stuttered. "The fire. We must dig."

Chano turned and scanned the desert. A hushed wind whistled through the weeds and lone trees. He saw no red glow.

"It is a desert," Chano said. "You will find no gold. The red fire is a lie. It tempts you to abandon the simple purpose of life. There is no treasure buried beneath the cactus and thorn bush. Go back to your village and work. There you might find peace, not in the desert."

"Peace? There is no peace for me. I will dig."

"Then dig. It is foolish, but dig. Yes, some can only dig."

The man shuffled back to this wagon like a dead leaf falling to the ground. He put on his hat and stepped up into the front. His companion, still bent, never moved. The man snapped the rein and the mule pulled the wagon into the desert.

Every night of the summer when people saw the red light glow, peasants came to see Chano.

Chano returned to his house and walked across the hard cement floor into the bedroom to cleanse his face in a basin of water. A scarlet rust ring soiled the once-white vessel. It was tainted with more than a decade of labor. I must get a new basin, Chano decided. There were three rooms in the house—the bedroom, the kitchen, and the rest of the house. The toilet was outside. Maria, his wife, had purchased a mirror trimmed in pine that stood almost as tall as a man and set it up in the bedroom. Before he washed, he examined his reflection. He was only forty-eight but deep wrinkles streaked his face. His brown eyes no longer contained the light of youth. Heat and time had glazed them like a mud brick in a kiln. He washed his face. The evening's sweat burned the corner of his eyes and tasted salty on his lips for a moment, then it was no longer there. How easy we wash the day's toil from our brow, he thought. If only I could wash my life's toil from my soul.

He didn't dry his face. The water dripped onto the cement floor sounding like gentle musical claps as he walked to the door and gripped the knob. He left it closed and paused, trying to remember what he had forgotten. Each year when the summer hid the dirty, naked winter beneath its green veil Chano tried to recall a lost dream. This night was like the rest—voices refusing to speak.

Chano woke the next morning as the sun broke across the horizon and he went about his chores as always. First he splashed water on his face to let his body know that it was another day.

Then he slipped his arms through his work shirt and went outside. He collected his cow and led her out of the shelter, made of scrap wood and shielded by a tin roof, into the bare pasture. Her calf followed along. He emptied the grain into the trough, which was next to the fence, and squatted down to milk her. The steam of milk hitting the metal pail reminded him of when he was a child. In the summer when there was no school he would run into the hills, after he had finished his chores, where no other human voice could be heard. He had felt free and close to God. He even practiced flying. When he tired he rested beneath the large mesquite tree which was at least forty feet tall. His father had said that the roots were probably deeper. Chano would reach up and pull loose a few beans of mesquite, chew on their sweet pulp and spit out the remains after he had sucked all of their sweetness out. He liked it out there in the hills because when he walked about the town the villagers would pull him aside and ask him questions of wisdom. And then there were strangers, too. He always answered correctly.

"See, I told you he was a smart boy."

"He will be something someday."

"Yes, God has blessed him."

When he came into the house with his pail of milk, his wife put his breakfast of beans and eggs on the wood table. She placed a cup made of pottery on the table and poured the fresh milk in.

"Buenos dias," they said to each other.

"The people are gathering at the cantina to discuss the drought," Maria said.

Chano scooped his beans with his tortilla. The tortillas kept warm by being wrapped in a dull, white cloth.

They want you to be there," she added. "Somehow we must get water into the fields so we can eat. You must go to Chihuahua and tell them."

"I will do what I can."

At eight, while it was still cool, Chano walked to the cantina. A small coat of dust covered the leaves just emerging from the trees and discolored the peeling paint on the buildings. The dust on the road was thick. Why do they depend on me? he asked himself. I'm not the mayor, or the priest. I own a small piece of dry land inherited from my father that I cannot pass on to any sons. I have no children. Once I'm dead, what will they do? They will forget me and realize that it was foolish to trust me for answers.

I'm no different than anyone else.

Chano arrived and listened to each man speak. All the men sat on the wooden steps of the cantina except Chano, who stood in the dirt street. He wanted to talk, but waited.

"What do you say?" Eusevio spoke.

"The lake is no longer enough," Chano said. "If we want to feed ourselves and our families we must dig an irrigation ditch that will go from our fields to the Rio Bravo. There is no other way."

The old men nodded their heads. But the young men were more skeptical. Eusevio stood.

"Why should the government listen to a bunch of farmers from a small dusty town?" he said.

The other young men nodded their heads.

"Do you pay your taxes?" Chano asked.

Eusevio looked confused.

"Yes. We all do."

"Then it is your right to utilize the river just as the city does."

"I told you he would find the answer," said an old man who excitedly wiped his sweat away with a red bandanna.

"He must convince the government first," Eusevio replied. "How will you do that?"

Chano's eyes did not dart about, nor did his lips move unless he was speaking, during the entire discussion. It appeared like he was indifferent. He wasn't. He wanted to help his people. He just did not enjoy the attention, and the jealousy.

"The government takes from us, does it not?"

Everyone agreed.

"Then we must do something that they can take from us." he continued. "We can raise more crops with more water. So we will sell more. That means more money. They will tax us for the money." Chano swabbed both his brows with the four fingers of his right hand and wiped the wetness on his pant leg. He glanced at the small church. The weeds poked up in patches like brown checkers on a checkerboard placed by a tentative hand. The sand-scarred wood door, dug with channels—as a great cat might have done sharpening its claws—blew open and shut. The people of El Faro traveled to Chihuahua if they wished to attend mass.

"They will get more money if they let us build the irrigation ditches. They will not miss the small amount of water we use," he finished.

"I told you," the old man said again. "I told you."

Late in the summer when the mesquite tree's beans began to harden and turn red and dark yellow, another man knocked on the door of Chano's house. He wore a black frock. But Chano did not think he was a priest. Maybe he heard of our large crop and wants a job when it is time for harvesting, he guessed.

"Buenas noches, Señor."

"Buenas noches," Chano said.

"I was told to ask you about the treasure. They said you would know."

The man who looked like a priest, but wasn't, as far as Chano could tell, was old and seemed familiar. His eyes were very dark. This is no priest for what would a priest want with earthly treasure, he thought—well, a decent one.

"There is no treasure to dig, just dust and rocks out in the desert."

"Please, I have come a long distance. I can see a red fire burning in the hills."

He is a good man, Chano thought. He is poor, alone, and he only wants the truth.

"There is no treasure in the desert. If it is treasure you must have, go home and work. There is no other peace in this world, even if you had treasure."

"But I have come such a long way, surely there is treasure here for me to find."

"Sometimes you journey your entire life and never find the treasure. I am still searching. All I know is that you must work and do your duty."

"I hope that is what you are doing," he said.

Chano was surprised. Was it a question? If it was he did not know the answer.

"Gracias," he said. "Now I will return to my home."

Chano watched the old man limping until the moon would give no more light, his black frock blended with the night and he could no longer distinguish him from the darkness. Chano closed his door and entered into bed without washing his face. He pulled the covers up under his chin but did not close his eyes. He heard Maria breathing. He knew she was awake.

"Chano?"

"What?"

"Everyone was happy that you convinced the officials in Chihuahua."

Chano said nothing. He kept staring.

"Do you remember the priest when we were little, the good priest, not the false one?"

"No," he lied.

"He said, 'You are a gift from God. You have something to say to us.'"

She rolled over and faced him taking his hand in hers.

"Have you spoken to us?" Maria asked.

"Go to sleep, Maria. I do not feel like answering questions tonight."

He remembered the good priest. His face was dark and honest. It was too ugly to lie. His hair was silver like the cold rivers of snow melted in the mountains. His eyes were as black as an abandoned mine, but they weren't desolate. Panthers occasionally live in empty mines. One day when he was nine he and a few of the other village boys were playing in the street in front of the cantina. The priest watched them from the steps because he did not like to stand on his club foot. He had witnessed everything that had happened in the small village and he was especially aware of Chano. The village knew he had been praying much.

"Chano," the priest called.

Chano walked over to him with his head down in reverence. The other boys quit playing and watched. Maria watched, too. Everyone watched.

"Yes, Father."

The priest gently held him by his two arms, then released him and held out his arms like he was receiving a child.

"You are a good boy. But God sometimes blesses us more than others. When he does, those who are blessed must serve those who aren't. Chano, you are a gift from God. You are an instrument in which God will speak to his people. Find out what you have to say to us. It will be like fire."

There was silence.

"Now go play."

Chano tried to play but he felt tight in his stomach. So he acted like he was playing. At supper he pushed his beans away but his mother pushed them back. Late that night he woke afraid. He tried to move his limbs but they wouldn't respond. A heavy

weight pressed his body into the mattress like he was being held down. He said, Mama, but only in his head. His mouth was mute. But he saw and heard—darkness and silence. He fought, in his mind, and then he burst from his covers and screamed. His mother ran in and asked what was wrong. He looked around the room. Everything was the same. "Nothing," he replied.

"Then stop that screaming."

But tonight he was awake again and not dreaming. His stomach contracted like he had eaten nothing. After Maria fell asleep Chano arose and splashed water in his face. He looked at the mirror, but it was too dark to see and he resisted lighting a candle. He slipped his arms through his work shirt and went outside. He went to the animal shelter and got his pick and shovel that he had used to dig the irrigation ditches.

He walked into the desert and found the large mesquite. He sat down and wondered about what the priest had said to him many years before. He chewed on a mesquite bean that had fallen to the ground. It tasted bitter. He spit it out. His stomach felt empty and nauseated, like he had just eaten dirt. I have nothing to say, he said aloud. Then he looked up into the high branches of the mesquite tree. I have never seen the fire nor felt it, he said like he was angry. What must it be like? I have tried to help my people, but still, I feel like an ant who contributes a small amount like all the others. maybe there is treasure in this dry land. Maybe I will find it and it will make me happy. He picked up his tools and walked toward the mountains.

The mountains appeared as dark, empty daggers jutting into the sky. They, and their valley that he lived in and was a part of, seemed very quiet. It was like they were hiding some secret that he did not know. Why won't they tell, he said. Then he came upon one of the ditches that he had helped dig. A steady steam of muddy water flowed through the small channel. He smiled. He was going to dig a new channel for a new field the next day. But he decided to start tonight since he could not sleep. He forced his muscles to work, striking the earth with the pick and scooping out the lose dirt and rocks with the shovel. Some can only dig, he said to himself.

Untitled

by Robert Geistwhite

As through a frog-spun shadow
from a jump-rope reached a
hand-down from an unbound
welkin into a yawning pocket:
a pocket-book(jump-)
hand(rope)
splinted by the needs
of a small neighborhood.

How that neighborhood
rose like cabbage, like rows
of cabbage stuffed with
heat and the sun's humidity.

How these rows
controlled the earth
and still managed
to fill each pot-hole and
school-aged child with
sophistry sopped up
from the ineffable goodness
of mankind which so often
is lacking.

How packing was pulled
from flea-market sofas
and baby's stuffed toys
to feed the older children.

How these the chosen ones
moved on till at last were
called upon to replicate the
burdens of yesterday as were
their parents and
their parents' parents
before them.
/After riding through Fountain Square neighborhood/

Family Album

by Chuck Farrell

Gary Bailey glanced at his watch again—eighteen hours on the road. He had been pushing the two-lane blacktop for the last three, slowing only for the occasional two-minute-towns—the kind that survive by the speed trap. The sky was slate gray, moving rapidly, and from time-to-time the northern gusts would rock Gary from his trance. The land was brutally austere, with endless stretches of stubbled white washboard, tufts of empty trees, graying red barns, half-stocked cribs, and lonely white clapboard houses.

His radio was crackling with"country," but Gary was not listening. He was looking at the sign; it was wind-and-buckshot worn, and it spoke with winter teeth: "Welcome To Railway, Indiana—Population 984—A Proud Community." Wired to its rusted supports were faded shreds of yellow ribbon and miniature American flags.

Gary slowed then cut the wheel toward the snow-bent weeds that bordered the asphalt and the last open field before town. He crossed his arms over the steering wheel, rested his chin, and for a moment watched a distant twinkling spruce dance with the frozen weight of the coming holiday.

* * *

The week before Christmas had always meant a trip to the pines for Gary and his grandfather, Woodruff Bailey. Although it was only a three mile walk across the crusted ruts and through the tangled domain of the leafless sentinels to the back corner of their land, it usually took at least four hours before the "Perttiest Ga damn tree we've ever had" was sitting bottom-branch-deep in a galvanized bucket in their mudroom. When Gary finally stood at equal height to its hickory length, his grandfather's ax made its first trip to the pines on his shoulder. That same year, Gary selected and cut the Bailey tree. "Ya only have ta walk round ah tree one time to know it's right. If ya gotta go twiced then let the winter keep it," his grandfather had always said.

Gary's thoughts drifted to yesterday and the phone call that had brought him back to this place.

When Clayton Egan, Railway's fourth-generation mortician,

had finally reached Gary, his grandfather had been dead for approximately six days. Clayton had told Gary, "Your grandad's neighbor, Donny Crandall, had been rabbit huntin' in the woods on the back of their connecting properties when he heard the cows in your grandad's barn raising all kinds of hell. When Donny went for a look-see, he found your grandad sprawled-out next to the barn, frozen to the ground. The sheriff said that he had apparently slipped, hit his head on the barn door when he tried to close it, and had laid there unconscious and unnoticed until he had frozen to death. The coroner said 'maybe since the sixteenth.' The Crandalls are keepen an eye on your grandad's building and livestock."

When Clayton Egan had finished expressing his well-rehearsed condolences, Gary gently recradled the receiver, set his beer on the Farmer's Almanac next to the couch and, while the evening shadows crept through his one bedroom apartment, wept a child's tears. Gary's beloved alcohol stupor faded with the realization that he was now the last Bailey.

* * *

The horn blast from a passing semi brought Gary back to the cold steering wheel. He raised his head and slapped his cheeks smartly to chase the exhaustion. Then he tipped the rear view mirror to "sleeve away" the tears. He was thirty-four years old. His face was gaunt and winter pale with deep shadows wrapping his re-rimmed eyes. His thread-bare mustache, side burns, and straight brown hair were all prematurely streaked. A boyhood scar angled downward from the corner or his mouth to his jawbone—a keepsake from his father. He was short by life insurance standards and, like his corduroy sport jacket, too thin for the weather. With a glance over his shoulder, he depressed the clutch pedal, shifted from neutral, and eased back onto the empty highway.

In the center of town, just off the main drag, the houses were silent—except for the wood smoke pouring horizontally from their chimneys. The Railway "tourist information center" had a neon "Budweiser" glowing red through the sweaty window and a plastic bubble swinging over the entrance which read: "The Farmers' Friend." The adjacent general store had a screen door; the Sunshine Bread girl smiled from the bushbar. Propped on the window ledge, among the faded labels and dehydrated flies, a curled-edge sign boasted "The freshest meat in town." Further, beyond the

abandoned porch and the glazed display racks of the Railway Feed and Grain, stood the two story black-shuttered house that had haunted Gary's sober nights for the past seventeen years.

The gravel crunched under the tires of his red, rust-bucket pickup as he pulled into the space marked "Family Members Only." Waiting for him on the other side of his fogging windshield was the Edward Egan and Son Funeral Home.

Gary closed his eyes; the last time he had been at Egan's was seventeen years ago. He could still see the sanguine drapes that hung at the end of the room where he had stood watching his parents as they lay side by side—only coffin walls with closed lids separating them. "Not much protection for my mother," he had thought at the time They had died on the evening of Gary's seventeenth birthday.

* * *

That birthday, like most January birthdays celebrated north of Tallahassee, started cold and shadowless; all morning the wind had pushed the bruised clouds, snow dust, and Gary's father, Paul Bailey, toward town. By noon Paul's Chevy Impala was parked on the ice-packed gravel next to the "Farmers' Friend;" all the Baileys but Gary had dropped into their deep but familiar ruts. He paced all afternoon like a dog in a thunderstorm, stopping occasionally to fold back the curtains and peer out through the road side windows. "What's the matter, Gary?" asked his mother, Norma, as she towel-dried her hands in the kitchen doorway.

"Nothen, Ma. Well . . . Daddy kinda said somthin bout a used car when I turned seventeen."

"Gary. Please don't get yur hopes up. Ya know yur daddy's been awful busy lately and sides ar money's been reel tight since harvest."

"It's them Ga damn Republicans with their Ga damn cut-backs tryen to run us small farmers to the poor house!" boomed Woodruff's voice from the only plumbed seat in the house where he sat with the door open and the daily paper spread in front of his face.

"Yah, I know," Gary said, still looking out the front window.

When the redolent aroma of Gary's favorites—fried chicken, hock-seasoned beans, and German chocolate cake—were "tasted" with every breath throughout the house, his mother called the tavern. "But, Paul, it's yur son's birthday, for Godsake!" In the

kitchen, the slammed receiver, having missed the mark, was dangling by its stretched coil and still bumping the wall when Norma headed out the back door, truck keys in hand.

Two hours later, the sheriff stood on the mud-rug just inside the Bailey's living room with Gary and his grandfather. "I am sorry, but . . ." Paul's body had been speared by the steering wheel and had to be cut from the truck's cab. His mother had been thrown through the passenger side of the windshield; she and the truck finally came to rest in the same spot. The sheriff, a regular at the "Friend," blamed icy road conditions and poor visibility for the accident.

The morning of his parents' funeral, Gary threw all he owned into a pillow case, took the money from the emergency jar in the kitchen pantry, and stuck a note between the laces and withered tongue of Woodruff's boot; it read: "Grandad, I had enough of farming and this small town. Reckon I got no reason to stay now anyhow. I'm heading south. Soon as I get me a job I'll pay you back for the truck. Gary." He headed for town in his grandfather's '68 Ford.

Gary's mother was now deeply buried with his childhood. He didn't stay for the official ceremony; he did, however, stop at Egan's on his way out of town to say good-bye.

* * *

Gary opened his eyes; the hard purple of evening had cast jagged shadows across Egan's building and lot. Even before Gary left the warmth and protection of his truck, he felt cold-jitters down to the bone. "I sure could use a drink," he said as he opened his door.

The bitter wind chewed at him as he pushed open the mortuary's lifeless black entry door. Kicking the snow from his Nikes, he stepped inside. The lobby was a dimly lit entry hall with a dark, oak plank floor. On the right, roped off from public use, was an ornately spindled staircase. A worn burgundy runner followed the steps into the darkened living quarters on the second floor. The walls were cluttered with "dead Egan's," and the air was thick with dank wood and formaldehyde.

Clayton Egan, his hand extended, was coming down the shadowed hallway; he looked just like his old man had—pale, plastic, and slump-shoulders. The conversation was stiff. "I'm Gary Bailey, and I've come to see my grandfather."

"Yes, of course you have. I'm Clayton Egan. We are all deeply distressed with your grandad's passing, especially the way he went. I guess the farm is all yours now."

"Can I see him now?" Gary said too impatiently. "Please."

"Of course you may," droned Egan. He led Gary through a set of eight-panel, solid oak doors to a long, narrow, barouque parlor. While a large mullioned window, draped in thick burgundy velour, dominated the left side of the room, the right side was dominated by an unadorned coffin, a solitary floral tribute, and a shock of white hair. After all those years, the only change in the room was the number of prone Baileys.

* * *

Gary's grandfather, like his father before him, had taken his first and last steps on the same patch of dirt. It had made him as coarse as a winter field—especially on his son Paul, Gary's father. Gary's grandmother had died giving Woodruff his only child, and Paul had always come up short as compensation. By the time Paul had married and Gary was born, he had learned to hate all things Bailey.

Both Gary and his mother bore the scars of a pregnancy that saw little bed-rest and even less male consideration. A premature dry-birth left Gary an only child and indentured his father to the roll of traditional farmhand for life. Unlike both his father and grandfather, Gary was physically frail; "the runt of a litter of one" Woodruff would say when lending him a hand with his more demanding chores.

When Gary was old enough to keep up with his grandfather, they walked the barbed fence rows, the tall corn, and every inch of the straw-matted barn. Woodruff showed him how to set "critter traps," how to rip-back the husk and check the pale-yellow kernels for ear worms, and how good an udder could feel to frozen milk-ing-fingers at the close of a January day. His grandad took him to their wooded acres where coffee-dark paths marked the passing of paws, hooves, and leaves and where Woodruff, at the age of ten, had chopped kindling, built a tree house with his brother, and "shot the biggest danged squirrel in the state."

On those excursions, Woodruff also spoke of their lineage and of the Bailey men who had ventured past the boundaries of Rail-way, but only to "kick the livin shit outta the Krauts, Japs, and those goose-steppin Nazi bastards," the ones that had buried his

younger brother, Billy.

In the spring of '72, Woodruff dozed-off while sunset-plowing the north field. The ground woke him in time to watch the cleated rear tire of his Allis-Chalmers crush his left ankle. It was four a.m. before a thin-faced man wearing a pale-green bonnet and a purplish crease across the bridge of his nose approached Gary and his mother in the otherwise unoccupied emergency waiting room. "Damn lucky the field was soft or he'd have lost the leg."

Gary and Norma spoke with him that afternoon. "How in the hell does that damn doctor figger I'ma gonna get corn in the ground with this piece of pottery on ma leg?"

"Don't worry, Grandad. I'll take care of it for ya!" Gary said enthusiastically.

"Thanks, Boy, but yur pa's jest gonna have ta start spendin more time on the tractor and less on the bar stool, that's all!"

That summer Paul was forced to take up some of the Bailey patriarch's slack, with Woodruff down, the local bank started pressing for back-loan payments, and rain was as scarce as Paul at quitting time. He went from a part-time to a full-time sundown alcoholic and spent the remainder of his life in a whiskey-enhanced rage. Gary spent those same years staying out of his father's way or healing after he hadn't. Even Woodruff, after his second trip in twelve months to Railway Memorial Emergency, this time for a bailing hood "mishap," got in the habit of looking over his shoulder when Paul was red-eyed.

Norma would slip into Gary's bedroom on "tavern nights," and while the storm rampaged outside his closed door, they would share their dreams. "I jest know this year's corn ell be the best ever, and in the fall yur daddy ell take us ta Indanaplis—maybe I'll get a Sears' dress . . . We'll have the best time. You'll see." Gary's prophesies turned from record squirrel shoots and the new John Deere down at Railway Farm Implements to shaded laughter under carnival-striped umbrellas, sparkling tides, palm tree silhouettes over tangerine horizons, and building castles of sand; but they were only available in the white wire racks of the Ben Franklin Five and Dime.

When twelve hours of "farm" and an excess of bar-stool time had finally silenced the echoes from Paul Bailey, Norma would go from Gary's room leaving behind her spoken dreams and always "Yur daddy loves us, Gary. It's this place he hates."

On hangover mornings, Gary would rise for school before the sun and slip into the kitchen where his mother would usually be waiting with a wax-paper-wrapped egg sandwich and a bruised-face kiss. Then with an occasional glance over his shoulder, he would make his way silently down their rutted drive to the mail-box. From there it was almost a mile to the hard-road bus stop; he walked it with his dawn shadow, sometimes kicking road-gravel into the dusted run-offs but always stopping to pick up one of the counties' most deadly stones to heave at the oak whose darkened, whispering tentacles canopied that last forty feet of his journey.

* * *

Clayton Egan tapped Gary on the shoulder for the second time. "I said, Mr. Bailey, would you like a moment alone with your grandad?"

"Yeh, Yes," said Gary, still trying to clear his ghosts. When he and his grandfather were alone, he bent close to him and whispered, "I'm sorry, Grampa." Then he kissed the old man's rouged cheek.

Gary walked out of the room and back down the hallway to the black door, opened it, and stepped into the clean, hard wind.

As he slid into the iced solitude of his truck cab, the cold vinyl quicky gnawed through his dress slacks. Gary keyed the ignition and watched his breath-clouds vanish with the warming breeze. As he waited for the two grapefruit-sized portholes to become a windshield, he thought of the seventeen-year-old who had ventured past the boundaries of Railway behind the wheel of his grandfather's truck.

* * *

Gary ended up in Florida and for two years sent monthly payments to Woodruff. His last correspondence, the final truck payment, held a fifty dollar bill and no return address; that had been fifteen years ago. For Gary, it was fifteen years of waking before the sun and minimum wage. The same evening that Woodruff slipped outside his barn, Gary was stocking produce in an Orlando grocery, the type that tourists would see only if they missed their exit. A year ago, Mrs. Gary Bailey, worn-out by ten years of government-subsidized rentals, hearing "Things will be different after the grand opening of Bailey's Nursery & Landscaping," and throwing away Budweiser "empties" packed up and moved with their daughter, Norma, back to Ohio to live with her

parents on their farm.

* * *

When the glass cleared, Gary backed from the "Family" slot then pulled up even with Egan's "Exit Only" sign. He looked south; a dark colored pick-up with only one headlight blazing, the other pushed back to the tire-well, was spinning gravel from the tavern's park-at-your-own-risk lot. Gary glimpsed the delicate features and pale stare of the passenger as the black Chevy one-ton blew through the wash of his highbeams. He looked back at the town's neon then turned north towards his farm.

The night was wrapped in rural blackness with only scattered beacons of life. The gravel road turn off came sooner than Gary remembered; he was forty feet beyond it before he could throw the truck into reverse. When his headlights finally arced through the turn, they crossed the splintered, rotting stump of his old enemy. He shook his head with an approving grin as he negotiated the last partially drifted mile.

Gary pulled in just past the snow-bound Bailey mailbox then followed the counties' tire ghosts up the drive. The house was a two-story silhouette against the barn-mounted sodium security light. Next to the weathered lap siding of the house, he killed the engine, took a flashlight from the glove box, and stepped from the truck into calm silence.

A crunch marked each step as Gary walked among the hard sole prints that increased in number as he neared the barn door. There under the light, was his grandfather's print cast in ice; Gary bent and touched the ridged surface. He could smell the straw and cow-soaked wood of the barn. He stood and went to the house.

In the kitchen, the supper dishes still waited. Throughout the house, the rooms were warm and only silghtly more worn and faded than Gary remembered. He had to smile as he passed the bathroom. In his bedroom everything was as he had let it; but unlike the other rooms, it was dust and cobweb free and the bed clothers were fresh. His vision blurred with tears as he flipped off the overhead light fixture and sat on the edge of his bed. He could still hear his mother saying "Yur daddy loves us. It's this place he hates." Gary lay back and fell asleep with his bedroom door open.

Gary woke with the glow of the sunlight pushing his window shade. His head was clear; he went to the kitchen and fixed ham, eggs, toast, and coffee. Outside the over-the-sink window, the

icicles were dripping and the fields sparkled. When he finished washing the dishes, he went to the mudroom where he found one of Woodruff's old coats; the sleeves were a bit too long, but it was warm and smelled of his grandfather's pipe. He filled a rusty pail from the storage cabinet with water then set it in the corner. From its leaning position next to the back door, Gary grasped the smooth hickory handle of his grandfather's axe, rested it on his shoulder, and took a three mile walk.

Untitled

by Robert Geistwhite

Dear David,
You must help me.
My world is going bald,
and there you sit
so full of hair.
Summer is gone.
The trees ache.
Naked locusts
bleed and shiver
in the Autumn air.
I am not so brave.

I watch blackboards
but miss the streets,
your stage, where
your hands danced
like John the Baptist's,
and your shoulders—
like mountains
under Moses. Where
your colored chalks
left faces on our noses,
and your cavemen
hid their thrones in roses
swaying, swept
from sidewalk s,
pra ying for
s ome t i me
or
some e v en ing
s o me
wher e.

What It Means

by Deborah Evans

The world
pours into me
like chunky sangria
from the pitcher.

Apple and lemon
edges bump
against my skin
from inside-out.

That is what it means
to live intoxicated,
perfumed,
and bitter-sweet.

Biographies

Jeffrey Beebe:
Born in April of 1971, Jeffrey Beebe was raised in surburban Indianapolis. He is currently an English major at IUPUI

Mark A. Curtis
I'm a Senior majoring in English. I like to write from experience, but I also like to retell old family stories, fashioning them in my own vernacular and expressing the truths I see in them.

Chuck Farrell:
I am married with two children, a full-time student majoring in sociology, working towards a masters in social work, and I eventually want to help in the healing of life damaged children.

Robert Geistwhite:
I am a second year medical student at IUPUI, with **Summerpoems** comprising my first, self-published chapbook.

Peter A. Monn:
Peter Monn is a Senior studying creative writing and literature. His work is greatly influenced by such writers and humorists as Linda Barry, Jill McKorkle and Harper Lee. He has been a Genesis staff member for three years.

David Savidge:
David, married and the father of four children, has been taking classes at IUPUI to renew his principal's license. He enjoys writing and uses observations from life as the basis for his work.

Derek Tow:
I am a Junior here at IUPUI. I am studying communications with a minor in creative writing. Poetry and songwriting are my main interests.