

genesis



fall, nineteen hundred ninety-five

Jackie II

11" x 15", acrylic on illustration board
A selection from the Jackie O. Series.

Olaf Jens Olsen

genesis:

a semiannual art and literary journal
dedicated to publishing artists' and authors'
work within the IUPUI system. Content is devoted
to imaginative and critical writing in the areas of fiction,
drama, essay, poetry, criticism and various forms
of visual artwork.

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~ founded in nineteen hundred seventy-two ~

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~ essay ~



Paris Flea Market
3" x 3", sepia tone photograph
Jennifer Baynes

Postcard from Paris

Laura McPhee

8 July - Paris
Gare de Lyon

Dear Sam,

11 pm and I'm waiting in the station — for the train back to Dijon after another perfect day in my favorite city. I don't want to go. I'm not ready to leave. I doubt I ever will be. I could stay in Paris forever — and would stay if I knew how.

I am perfectly at ease here. I never feel lost because no matter where I am — I am exactly both where I belong and where I long to be. There is no tightrope for me here. There is no struggle, no fear, no regret, no compromise, and no need for disguise. I never have to worry about, or even consider, rebellion or assimilation. I don't need to. Paris swallows me whole — and likes the way I taste.

The rhythm of the city provides a perfect soundtrack to the movie of my day. Without any effort or concentrated design, Paris moves and carries me along — matching an internal pace which seems out of sync in varying degrees everywhere else in the world. I am in perfect rhythm with the streets.

Surrounded by motion and music. The Metro below me, the Seine to my left, the Tour Eiffel swaying overhead, and a beautiful man named Charlie dancing to the saxophone notes floating down Saint Germain. Picking me up, carrying me in its tide until I become so fluid I am certain I must be floating. The city moves me — even now when I am sitting perfectly still.

Hemingway called Paris “a moveable feast” and I know what he meant. My appetite soars. Ravenous and gluttonous, I swallow every delicacy the city has to offer. A banquet unfolded before the masses and I am determined not to dine but to devour every sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell before me.

I am dizzy but the movement does not disappear when I close my eyes. Sounds of voices and languages I cannot ignore. The noise of motion. The noise of movement. It is a twisted melody springing from the ground — the streets — the cafes — the children — the musicians — the past — the whispers.

Accompanying the symphony of sound is a delicious smell — an odor which permeates everything, even the darkness. The sweetness of flowers in

every garden, park, and window. The fresh smell of bouglangeries and pastisseries on every block of every street. The stench of urine and fear in every Metro station. The exhaust of cars and the exhaustion of tourists.

Nothing feels like this. Nothing feels like Paris. Nothing understands me, excites me, invites me or seduces me like Paris. It is the one time in my life I do not feel like running away. The only place I don't feel trapped. The only place I don't feel wasted.

All the voices which usually clamour and distract and dictate my thoughts are drowned out here by the gentle whisper of the city. I here it call my name and want so badly to listen. Want desperately to hear. Because when I listen to Paris I am listening to the truest part of my soul — and the collective unconsciousness of all the other dreamers who have heard Paris whisper, "listen ... and believe."

*Wish you were here.
XOXO...Red*



Wine Casks, Paris
5 1/2" x 5 1/2", black and white photograph
Jennifer Baynes

~ poetry ~

Margo Warms Soup

John Matthew

She leans against the stove
feet in ballet style: knowing she is watched,
stirring the pot, then restless
moves to fiddle with the percolator,

disinterested but half
aware of her
hands, she is eleven, and knows
she is watched.

She learns to be behind
glass; she moves,

again stirring; playing the yellow broth.

The Suburbs

Kelly K. Jones

Plastic-metal clone houses
squares of perfect green carpet
devoid
of those lovely yellow dandelion flowers you once clutched in chubby fists
stepping over cracks
on the way home to Mother
who put them in a Dixie cup on the kitchen sill.

Pizza delivery Chinese takeout
children dash to ballet and piano and soccer and swimming
instead
of observing ants and frogs and sunflowers and mud cracks
and lying in soft fragrant clover beds making shapes out of clouds
while Mother baked chocolate chip cookies
and let you lick the bowl.

Concrete slabs
Styrofoam and brick fake fronts
wanting
porches with rails and steps and rockers and grandparents
and parents
who waited up for you as your boyfriend left you kissed on the stoop
and listened for the slam of the wooden door.

Wally World
Sam makes and owns everything we buy all the same stuff
obliterating
the corner grocery and penny candy store where you bought Dots
and an occasional chocolate ice cream cone
while Mother got the supper
and you wheeled the packages home together in your red Radio Flyer.

Heartsick
longing for children now as children were
yet
finding that children and parents and people and places
and things
have been hopelessly, irreversibly changed —
and none of them wants to go back.



Portrait of Erin, 5" x 7" (left) 5" x 3 1\2" (right)
black and white photographs

Plain Jane

She's vanilla ice cream,
A daisy on the stem.
Simplicity breathing.
So quiet.
Don't dare blink
Or she will vanish into
Absolute nothing.



Forever an Image

Kevin A. Stella

I awake to dust particles which appear and then disappear as they gracefully fall from the sunbeam, uninterrupted by steel giants, like in the city.

The miniature porcelain cowboy, which has been living far longer than myself, comfortably sits on his steed greeting me with his story-telling stare.

My body tells me it is early and begs for another two hours, but I know he is already awake because I hear him as I faintly sleep.

I listen to the rustling of the oversized and warm coveralls as he pulls them off the hanger.

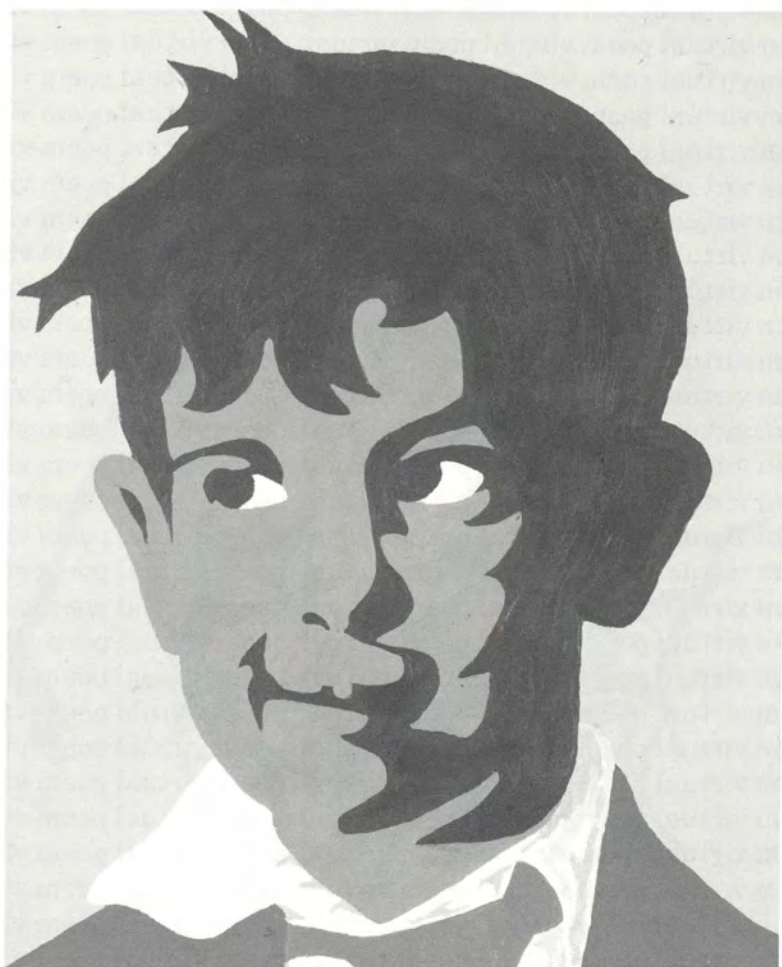
Then I hear the extended sound of teeth grinding together as the zipper races from his right knee to his collar bone.

As he tries to quietly walk past my door and not disturb me, I pretend to sleep; however, his thick, white, cotton socks scuffing the carpet as he goes by persuade me to whisper good morning. I would soon arise and join him, but like always, I must first lie back and let the fragrance of his black coffee and Lucky Strike mix and fill my bedroom.

I quickly dress and go to the kitchen.

As I eat breakfast he calmly reads the list of chores he needs to do that day, which he had scratched on a blue piece of paper. He said he wished that I, his helper, could stay, but I could not. Mom would be arriving soon in her navy, four-door family sedan, "the perfect car for city driving," as she always said.

As I was driven away an hour later I did not know it would be the last time I would here the gravel rocks from the driveway jump and tap the sides of mom's sedan, or the last time I would breathe that extraordinary aroma. And who would have thought my good morning whisper would become granddad's eternal good night.



Untitled
7 1/2" x 9 1/2", acrylic on illustration board
Olaf Jens Olsen

Loneliness in Waiting

Kristi Jensen

A flower stands alone in a field of burnt weeds.
The north wind passes through and caresses its seeds.
Filtering light from dark, creating shadows on the ground;
Each and every one making not but a sound;
The stem falters and bends creating it to sway;
Waiting for the north wind to bring forth another struggling day.



Untitled
10" x 9", pen and ink on paper
Annette Echard

**The cat stopped washing to listen to
Thelonious Monk play Misterioso.**

On one of his more painful
notes during his awkward
parade she stopped washing. her face.

They are pieces together
a piano and a purr
pleasure and the tones
calling to, and from; a washing. mind.

John Matthew

Richard DuFour

Rene Hartloff

He was not like a teacher I'd known before
The English instructor, Richard DuFour
He came in the first day wearing cowboy boots
A peppery mustache and grey in his roots
With a friendly smile, he talked to the class
He said he was there to help us pass
I thought him odd, but a clever gent
So laid back and cool as he came and went
His eminent laugh hung in the air
It made me glad I was there
His old grey hat seemed to complement his attire
In his eyes burned journalistic fire
His methods amoral, the parameters astounding
The sensuousness in spoken paragraph resounding
I shall respectfully remember him well
And the class into which, by chance, I fell
This unique individual illusioned as a teacher
I'll not forget help through a very tough time
And his enjoyment of my wit and rhyme
Not intruding was his constructive advice
Never annoying yet always concise
Tall and somewhat lanky, but gentle and kind
His teachings did more, they reopened my mind
Thanks for your help, now and then
Thanks to you I am writing again
Unlike anyone I'd met before
Was my instructor, Dick DuFour.

“Democracy”

Marcus Manning

“Change/” “Change/” you said/ you fed
me Fleetwood Mac with echoes of “Yesterday’s gone”
and I/
clapping with my hands held high
didn’t think about how you never look my way/.
But you smiled at me/
as if you knew me when I came to board/
and I sat down in my usual reserved seat/
Smiling/
Thinking about all the things you said.
Strange Pain/ the fact/
The fact is that “Yesterday” is coming back/

“Color blind Government/”
dripping from the lips of those
who view diversity as/
The thick dark mud on their white Mercedes/
My kids still singing “Dixie Land” in school/
I start to help you find your spine/
But you turn your back on me
to make “Yesterday” a present day fact.

~ prose ~

The Covenant

J. Brice Mabry

Ten years it had been. Ten years it had been since he had stepped foot inside the small grocery on Main street of his home town. Ashley handed the cashier a buck for a Coke and waited for the change. She paused staring at his face, still his eyes looked out the front window not wanting to be noticed let alone recognized.

"Ashley Hogan is that you? Where have you been?" She smiled, proud of her find.

"Idaho."

"Idaho!" Good gosh, that's a long way from Missouri. You don't recognize me do you?" She proceeded to remind him they had gone to school together before Ashley had left Arborville.

He didn't need reminding. Her name was Reatta Sommers and he had kissed her in the sixth grade. She had two older brothers and her dad died when she was eight.

"None of us knew what happened to you when you left. Everybody said you went and ran away." She was digging.

"No. I went to live with some relatives. They have a farm." He lied.

"Well, I see ring on that finger. Is someone waiting for you back in Idaho or did you bring her home?"

"No. She's waiting. Just came back to tie up some loose ends."

"I'm sure your folks are glad to see you. I'm glad to hear you're doing OK."

"Thanks, Reatta. I'd better get rolling. Take care of yourself." Ashley knew he had better run while he could. She was apt to catch him up on how her life had progressed.

The burning sunlight found his eyes and a memory caught up with him. He wanted nothing from this town or its people. If his past had been paper it would be ash by now, swept away by a thousand winds. He didn't want any of the memories but here was one just the same and he could not erase it.

Ashley was ten and walking out of this grocery store carrying a gallon of milk for his mother who hurried on ahead. An old man with flowing white hair pointed to him and said with a grin.

"That's quite a shiner you got there. How's the other fellow look?" He was talking about the black eye Ashley had received the previous day. The young boy stood silent with shame. Ashley's mother ran back putting one arm around him to hurry him along.

"Oh, you know how boys are. Always roughhousing and trying

to prove who's tougher." She laughed uncomfortably.

Don't worry, boy! One day you will be bigger than the bullies!"
The old man laughed.

He was right. One day Ashley would, and today was the day.

He drove the rented Cavalier south on Main Street past churches and houses which hadn't changed in the ten years he had been away. The familiarity seemed so foreign to him. It was difficult to admit but this was his home. This rural, southern, redneck speck on the map was his home town and it disgusted him. He was suddenly glad Rebecca wasn't with him.

Rebecca. She had begged him not to go. She had pleaded almost to the point of anger.

"Let the past die in the past, Ashley. There is nothing there for you but dirt and cows and an old man who has buried himself in anger. A lonely, ignorant fool who is probably goddamned ashamed of his life. You have a new life now. Here and now, in Idaho with me you stubborn son of a bitch! If you love what you have you'll abandon those memories and focus on us!"

She didn't like it but she had understood eventually. She was a good wife.

He turned onto a gravel road bordered by barbed wire and knew he was close. About four miles to the Hogan residence and from what Reatta at the grocery had said they were still around. He had missed his mother. Rebecca had persuaded him to contact her several times but he wasn't ready. He could almost pity the woman but she had stayed in the house making Ashley stay too. It hurt him to admit it but she was content there and got what she deserved.

The barn was still standing. It had needed desperate work when he left but there was no money for that. Ashley's stomach knotted in anxiety for the first time since he had gotten on the plane. This was the day. He couldn't believe it had finally arrived.

He pulled down the long gravel drive and saw his mother on her knees in the strawberry patch by the house. He had picked those strawberries once.

Her hair was very short and she was as thin as he remembered. She watched the Cavalier slow to a stop then cautiously stood up. She would not recognize him which he had expected. He had bought the sunglasses for this very purpose.

Ashley stepped from the car and was not quite sure what to say.

He had rehearsed this moment a thousand times but was unexpectedly silent. His mother. God, he wanted to wrap his arms around her shielding. If only he could have saved her from her life. She had endured the pain like he had but she had stayed.

He recalled the last moment in that cursed house, and the angry note left on the kitchen table scribbled on a brown paper sack. It was all the good-bye that was necessary.

“Can I help you?”

She didn't recognize him. That was good. He just wanted to take care of his business and get back to Idaho. There would be no time for hugs and kisses. There would be no questions: where have you been? how are you? This wasn't a social call.

“Is Mr. Hogan around?”

Her face turned to stone. Simple recognition of a voice she'd not heard in ten years, Ashley had not counted on. She brought her hands up to her mouth and stood there frozen.

He didn't want this. There was not time for an emotional scene. He didn't want her tears or apologies or prayers.

“Ashley, my god Ashley.” She ran to the car and threw her arms around him crying like a mother should. The questions poured out one right after another. He hugged her back but tried to keep his mind clear remembering the reason for this pilgrimage home.

“Oh! Praise God! Where have you been? Of my boy! Where did you go?” She wailed. Her painful cries ripped at Ashley as he, for the first time felt ashamed for leaving her.

“Mom. Mom,” she was quiet momentarily, “go get dad.”

She didn't have to. He was walking down the front steps holding a can of beer, a dirty Pioneer cap sat back on his tanned head. He wore baggy jeans with a T-shirt half in and half out. His stomach protruded much more than Ashley remembered. He was still a big man, only older, but the eyes were the same. They were still hard and direct but not as threatening.

“Who is that Corina?”

She was still crying and clutching his face striving to swallow the impossible physical change in this man who had once been her son. Corina turned to her husband.

“It's our son!” Don't you recognize him, Kyle!” It was more of an angry demand than a question.

Kyle stopped at the bottom of the steps and looked at Ashley as if

he had been expecting this visitor all day. His wife, deep in regret and tears, continued clutching onto Ashley while he tried to free himself.

“Did ya come to apologize to your mother for leaving her and breaking her heart or to keep that promise of yours, boy?”

Corina stopped crying and spun around to face her husband. Puzzled, she looked back to her son. There were no signs of sorrow or compassion on the faces of these twins.

“No! You two stop this!” It’s been ten years!” She pleaded to Ashley, “You didn’t come for that did you, son? Tell me you didn’t! Tell me! Its been ten years!”

The men, stony faced, glared at one another and the father knew. Ashley pulled the sunglasses off and threw them in the front seat of the Cavalier. He gently removed his mothers arm which tried to hang on to him. She began to plead again, to both men, but her ramblings were muffled by anger and uncertainty within father and son.

“You caused your mother a lot of pain boy, and here you come back to break her heart again. You should’ve stayed gone. We’re doing just fine without you.”

“How could you hit a boy who was less than half your size? How could you hit a woman who’s done nothing but serve you and tend to you like you were a baby? I’ve thought of nothing else for ten years you son of a bitch. You had no right to treat us like that.”

“I tried to raise you right, boy!” I put the fear of God into ya and taught you respect and manners. I put plenty of food on the table and clothes on your back at the cost of my health. This is how a respectful son acts, is it?” Kyle boldly stepped forward, eye to eye with his stranger son and paused for a reaction, head up, eyes wide. “You’re not welcome here, boy!” Get in your goddamn car and get off my property.”

Ashley thought about that for a moment. For the first time in ten years he considered turning his head and walking away. Going back to Idaho and living without a past. Could he shamelessly show his mother the angry, hateful side of him?” He could take hold of himself and climb back into the car, stick his ass back onto that airplane and have his feet in Idaho dirt by midnight.

Ashley questioned his purpose here letting the conflict strike a firm hold on his reasoning. Maybe he could send his mother Christmas cards and just forget she lived with the bastard of a man.

Maybe there was a lesson here he hadn’t allowed consideration. Slouching before him. The symbol of his hate, anger, blame. Every-

thing he detested in himself was right here in blue jeans. Was forgiveness possible? No acceptance just forgiveness. Was Rebecca right? Could he leave the past in the past?

Ashley's eyes widened-then turned back to granite.

"No! Hell no!" he spit between his clenched teeth then threw a hard right with such speed and force Kyle didn't even blink. It caught him on the left cheek bone causing his head to jog backward.

Ashley was vaguely aware of his mother's screaming pleas. Kyle's head snapped back and he instinctively brought his hands high for defense. They were no help against Ashley's following left which landed on the brow putting the old man on the ground.

Red streamed down Kyle's face in rivulets then he tasted his own blood. For half a second he peered into Ashley's eyes realizing how the small boy must have felt. Helpless. Hopeless.

Ashley came down on top of Kyle grabbing the front of his shirt and pinning him to the ground. The old man clutched the young man's arms, holding not aggressing.

"Ten years, dad!" I got more in me but if I don't stop now I never will." Ashley glared down as if forced to look at some dreadful disease. "You are a sorry son of a bitch. But I'm free of you now. I won't be like you. My son deserves better!"

He released the confused, defeated man realizing just how old he really was, Kyle was silent. His wife, had fallen to her knees and was whispering prayers through tears which streaked through the Missouri dust on her face.

Ashley was already headed down the red dirt drive, the first leg of his long trip home.

"...Just came back to tie up some losse ends."

The Lemon Sax

J. Brice Mabry

This was the day. Anna knew after her second cup of coffee. It was simply beautiful outside and she had opened her windows to enjoy the cool October breeze. She let the air cleanse her small upstairs apartment as she fastidiously cleaned every room. Today was a good day to clean. And, of course everything had to be clean. She couldn't let anyone see her place looking anything but clean.

Such a quick day!

It seemed like the sun had just risen before it disappeared behind the two huge oaks which could be seen from her sliding glass door. But there was still so much to do. She made her one outside errand before noon. Anna had driven to Woolworth's to buy socks and white underwear. She remembered her mother always commenting on the importance of clean, white underclothes. Her mother would see her in nothing but clean, white underclothes.

She found herself staring out the glass door until she saw nothing but darkness. *Where had they gone?* She had been so busy preparing, she felt the loss of this day. But it was good to stay busy. It kept the mind from wondering. She could be so much happier when there was work to do. She did like to stay happy.

Anna dug into the oversized closet, which seemed to be the only spacious thing inside the apartment, and searched for things. *What things?* She knew she would know when she found them.

Ah, the brass plaque from high school band. The band had won first place in some contest her senior year. *What was it?* Those days were far away along with the smiles she remembered but this was important just the same. It was a good keepsake. It was thrown on the bed.

From amongst the bags and boxes she pulled a dark, wooden jewelry box. Her grandmother had brought it back from her vacation Europe - or was it Mexico? She imagined the tanned and weathered hands which had made the jewelry box. Did the owner of the hands make enough money selling his jewelry boxes to feed his family? She wondered if he was happy making the jewelry boxes or if it was boring. Maybe he had visions of greatness when he was younger. How terrible it must have been to realize he would never find that greatness. Maybe making jewelry boxes is greatness to some men.

Wherever it had originated, it was simply beautiful and still had the two pair of earrings grandmother had given to her. Anna wished she could have known the woman longer. On to the bed it went.

A few other objects accompanied the brass plaque and wooden jewelry box on the quilt which covered the bed she had shared with Tim on a few occasions. To most, the collection would look like the beginnings of an accumulation for the Salvation Army but to Anna these articles held significant value. Her family would understand this too.

The assortment was labeled and laid out on the small bar in the small apartment where they could easily be seen.

Oh, how late it was. *Past ten o'clock.* Tim worked ten hour shifts and would be starting anytime now. She had to hurry. The apartment was certainly ready but she needed more time for herself.

She stripped, throwing her sweaty cleaning clothes in the basket then stepped into the shower. Anna meticulously cleaned herself. Washing her short brown hair twice and leaving the conditioner on twice as long as usual. The warm water cascaded off her shoulders as she let the steam relax her almost to sleep. She could easily sleep now. But there was still so much to do. There would be plenty of time to sleep later.

She ran her fingers over her supple breasts then let them fall, pausing for a moment, before they found her center. Tim touched her like this. He was kind and gentle and made her breathe heavy enough to feel light-headed. He was the only one who had touched her there. He would be the only one, too.

She dried, wrapping a separate towel around her head and walked naked into the kitchen for a Diet Coke. She drank from the can because dishes had already been washed and she would not dirty any others. When her family came they would see no dirty dishes.

The hair was combed straight back: no mousse or gel. She would look as natural as possible for them. They would be happy to see her like this. A little blush and perfume. Yes, more perfume - it would need to last for several hours. That was all.

Anna knew what to wear. The clothes had been ironed this morning and had sat on the bed the rest of the day waiting for her warm body to crawl inside them. Her usual alternative wardrobe had been thrown out. The ripped jeans, the camouflage, tie-dies, all of it was gone as of nine-thirty this morning. Her family would not see her in that again. Ever. She wanted to look good for them tomorrow. Cream slacks and a blue, short sleeve blouse.

She slipped into the new underclothes knowing her mother would be happy with her. She put on the slacks and blouse then the pair of short white socks. She finished with the gold necklace and matching

bracelet Tim had bought for her birthday in May.

She checked and double checked in the mirror. They would all be pleased. It felt good to smile. How long had it been since she smiled like this? "Oh, Anna, this is the real you." she said to herself. This is the real 'you' they will see." She would smile like this until she slept. There would be no tears this day. No tears ever.

Everything appeared to be in order. It felt amazing to be so organized and set. The apartment was immaculate and she was glowing. There was harmony in her life for the first time. Tomorrow there would be no deadlines, no time card, no cleaning or explaining or crying. No worry about rent or career or family. How long had she waited to be this resolute?

On tip toes, Anna reached high above the refrigerator into the cabinet which held appliances she and Tim rarely used. Among the waffle iron, blender and electric knife she was able to grasp the half-full bottle of tequila which had been there since before her birthday in May. She took two lemon halves out of the fridge and set them on the counter. They had been cut earlier in the day so as not to leave any dirty dishes. She sunk her teeth into one half then rushed the bottle to her lips swallowing with zeal. She gulped until the foul liquid promised to come back up then hurried the lemon half back to her mouth. How could something so sour ever taste so sweet, she wondered.

Anna did this two more times before her stomach made her quit. The bottle was replaced and the lemon halves, both sucked dry, were thrown into the garbage disposal where they were adequately chewed.

"What next, Anna?"

She knew. She had to make the call to Tim. The call would have to be made before she could go on with her chores. She sat by the phone and picked up a picture she had taken of him at the beach. Such a wonderful man he was. Why he had ever stayed with her she could not comprehend. He had fought all the battles with her, for her. In a world of sand he was a rock. *Dear Lord he deserves a rock too.* She dialed.

He was at work, of course, so his telephone at home rang for what seemed an eternity. The answering machine clicked on giving its rendition of Tim telling the patient caller to wait for the beep and he would surely get back to them. What a peaceful voice he had. Even the recorded message brought goosebumps.

"Tim, this is Anna. Its late and I know you are at work but I need you to do something foe me when you get home. Tim, I love you and I

would never want to hurt you but you are the only one I have. Tim, I don't want you to come over. I want you to call the hospital and have them send an ambulance over here. Its not an emergency, Tim. Do this for me if you love me. You have my heart and soul and I love you more than I could ever say." She hung up without saying good-bye. Good-bye was too permanent.

"Anna, that wasn't so hard, now was it?" She almost grinned.

She walked to the stereo, turning it on with the remote. Digging through the box of CDs she found Kenny G. This was a favorite and Tim liked it too. She placed it on the tray and programmed it for repeat play. With the sound of Kenny in the background she turned off the living room lights and found her way to the bathroom.

Lighting the candle, she encountered a much younger girl staring back at her from the mirror. She turned away from that girl not wanting to feel the pain in her eyes.

Anna grabbed the wrinkled paper bag on the counter, withdrew its contents, then wadded the bag up tightly before dropping it into the flowery trash basket. That was the only piece of trash in the apartment and she had a mind to take it to the dumpster - but no, it would be OK. She really didn't think they would mind this one little piece. It was wadded up really tight too.

The towel she had used after her shower was folded in half and laid on the floor next to the tub. She knelt on it, curling her legs under her and to the side then turned on the cold water. She considered adding a little hot water but she had used so much already. The other tenant might want a hot shower, or hot water for their dishes - she wouldn't want them to do without because of her. She had not spoken to any of them since she had moved in but she was sure they were all nice people.

The square, tin container was still in her hand and she brought it closer to her face in order to see it in the candlelight. It was very simple she could see.

She placed her thumb on the first razor in the tin and slid it out. It was so thin and flimsy. This is what the people in the movies use though.

How good it would feel to sleep, she thought. To close these eyes and drift off to the sound of the saxophone in the distance.

Oh, play to me Kenny. Take away my pain.

“Anna, no more crying, now. You’ll never have to cry again.”
The saxophone wept in the next room, crying Anna to sleep.

“Anna, that wasn’t so hard, now was it?”

Crossing the Delaware

Diantha Daniels Kesling

Now that the moment had finally come, it seemed odd that she was thinking of George Washington. After all, it was a golden warm day in early September 1945, over a century and a half since the esteemed general had left his mark on this part of the country. And today of all days, she should be thinking of the future—not some distant historical event. She tried to remember Dr. Spencers' speech as he gazed soberly out through his spectacles into the shimmering sea of more than eight hundred white-robed graduates of Trenton Central High School, exhorting them in the words of Longfellow to go forth into the world "with all the hopes of future years."

Mina herself was going forth today with great hopes for her own future years at the College of Wooster, six hundred exhilarating miles away from everyone she had known during the eighteen years she had lived at 53 Carlton Avenue. She had boarded the dark green "Broadway Limited" a few minutes ago when it shuddered to a stop in Trenton after leaving Penn Station in New York an hour before. Now it was about 7:15, and the morning sun's rays were beginning to streak yellow and blue through the grimy gray clouds of smoke from the factories along East State Street. Gliding smoothly under its wire, the train was rolling effortlessly westward, picking up speed as they crossed the long stone-arched Delaware River Bridge into Pennsylvania.

Of course, George Washington had been going the other direction, and there had been no bridge then. Mina, obedient student that she was, could recite the story by heart. The low stone building disappearing in the shadow of the State Capitol was the Old Barracks, temporary quarters for the Hessian soldiers during part of the Revolutionary War. Late on Christmas night in 1776, Washington and his cold, war-weary American troops surprised the Hessians, who were gaily carousing around the warm fire within the secure walls of the Barracks. Unnoticed by the drunken soldiers celebrating indoors, the Americans had crossed the icy Delaware River from Pennsylvania. There they had routed the Red Coats in the Battle of Trenton, and a few days later, had gone on to engage the British successfully again a few miles north in Princeton. On their way, they had marched up what was now Pennington Road, part of the same route Mina had taken back and forth to school for thirteen years.

Anyone who had grown up in Trenton, New Jersey knew that the events of that long-ago Christmas night and the following march to Princeton were glorious moments in the history of the original thirteen colonies. Trenton might be a rather dingy factory town now, but in its brief mo-

ments of greatness it had even enjoyed status for a few weeks as the capital of the new nation. Therefore, reminders of the Revolutionary War were everywhere. For the last two summers at the bank where she worked, Mina herself had stood dwarfed beneath one of them, an enormous painting of the historical crossing. General Washington was standing up, his great presence focused heroically on the distant horizon. Seated around him in the frigid stillness of the December night were about a half dozen of his ill-clad men—all crammed into what looked like a rowboat.

Now Mina Anne Hayes, the student named by her peers the “Class of ‘45’s Most Ambitious Girl,” was crossing the Delaware, and the crossing seemed to be as much a turning point for her as Washington’s had been for the American army. Her gray-blue eyes softened slightly at the idea—Grandma Sexton would have scoffed that such thoughts *proved* she was too big for her britches—and she self-consciously smoothed the crisp folds of her new covert-cloth skirt.

Well, actually, it was new to her, but it had been Aunt Nita’s first. However, Mina was sure the gray skirt and matching jacket had been altered so skillfully no one could tell the suit hadn’t been bought for her to begin with. Gazing at her reflection that morning in the mirror over Mother’s dresser, she decided that the tedious time spent turning in a circle an inch at a time to the right while Mother adjusted and readjusted the pins to mark the hem line had been worth it.

“You’re not standing straight, Mina,” Mother had chided her for what must have been the tenth time, her mouth stretched into an even thinner line by the pins she held tight between pursed lips.

Mina had obediently shifted her posture and screamed defiantly—but silently as always, “I am, too!”

However, the image which met her clear, level gaze this morning no longer looked like her mother’s perfect only child; it looked like that of a mature young woman who was more than ready to go off on her own. For once Mina felt as though she looked like everyone else her age. The white blouse she had bought with the lapel collar and delicate buttons, each one etched with a pale gray flower, was perfect with the suit. Even her thick, straight-as-a-yardstick hair had cooperated with the carefully placed pin curls of the night before, and today it framed the fair skin of her face with an auburn softness. She felt perfectly elegant in the first pair of real nylon stockings she’d had since eighth grade Graduation—they were finally available again now that the war was

“...the Class of ‘45’s Most Ambitious Girl”

over.

Peace at last. The air seemed fresh with promise, in spite of the closed windows and the number of men smoking on the train.

“PHIL-a-delphia!”

The conductor’s deep bass jolted Mina squarely back into the present. The steady rumble of the train was rudely interrupted by the loud shriek of the approach whistle, as the engineer slowed to signal their arrival at Broad Street Station. Several men with briefcases were hurriedly gathering up their papers, straightening their ties, and snatching their hats from the rack overhead. As they left the train a number of other passengers brushed past them to take their seats. Some other young people who looked like college students were also getting on and off. Philadelphia was a busy place.

Mina realized suddenly that, even though she’d only gone thirty miles, she had already traveled farther than most of her family ever had. The Delaware River formed the boundary of the existing world for most of them. Although she didn’t feel like one, she guessed some people would call her a pioneer. After all, no one in her family had ever been to college, and not many in her graduating class were going either. Most of the ones who were had chosen Trenton State Teacher’s College or Rider, a business school close to home.

Of course, Molly was going away to college, too, but her family was different. She had always been able to take it for granted that she would go. Mina smiled, thinking of the last four years when serious-eyed Molly Hemeon had been her closest friend, one of the few kids in her class whose mother was as strict as hers. Well, almost. Even Molly’s mother hadn’t made her wear ugly cotton lisle hose in the winter all the way through high school when everyone else in the civilized world was wearing bobby socks. On the coldest days a few girls wore thin rayon hose under their socks, but nobody ever wore those heavy cotton things. Well, to be quite truthful about it, Mina herself had only worn them to get out of the house. Then, like surreptitiously stashing the dirty laundry when unexpected company arrives, she had hurried into the bathroom as soon as she got to school to take the horrid brown things off and stuff them into her locker. At the end of the day she made sure she was the last one to leave school so no one saw her when she left, her slender legs encased once more in the despised baggy cotton stockings her mother insisted would keep her from “catching her death.” To hear her tell it, Mother would never have thought of arguing with *her* mother. So Mina

didn't either. But there was a lot Mother never knew as a result.

Molly had left for Middlebury in Vermont two days ago. Mina wondered who her roommate would be and whether Mrs. Hemeon was adjusting to the idea of her daughter being away on her own. After all, what Molly and Mina laughingly referred to as "The Great New York Adventure" was less than six months ago. Smiling at the memory, Mina crossed her new black pumps carefully at her ankles and leaned back against the coarse scratchiness of the dark brown upholstery. Today there was no one around her who cared whether she sat up straight or not.

"Mina, I can't go!" It was Molly, wailing on the telephone early one drizzly Saturday morning last March. Mina, home for once, instead of spending the weekend with her grandparents, had been perched comfortably on the window seat in the dining room, her saddle shoes tucked up under the cuffs of her dungarees.

"It's my *mother*," Molly had continued. "Evidently it just dawned on her that you and I will be alone in a New York hotel room for *five* days. She says we're too young, that it's asking for trouble. What's she think we're going to do? Order a bottle of whiskey sent up and invite the boys over? I'm so mortified I could die! I told her *she'd* have to tell Miss Ingoldsby."

Mina remembered how her heart had plummeted as Molly went on about the injustice of it all, mothers in particular. She knew that the main reason Mother had allowed *her* to sign up for the senior trip was because her roommate would be Molly. Molly's family lived in the West State Street area in town and Mrs. Hemeon belonged to the Contemporary Club. This put her on a level with Proper Trenton, society beyond Mother's wildest dreams. Kids from the townships on the outskirts of the city where Mina lived were often viewed as "country cousins" when they went to the huge city high school, so Mother was proud that many of Mina's new friends there had been from the very "nicest" families. Their fathers were doctors and lawyers, whereas Daddy hadn't even finished high school, and, after a number of years as a junior high school manual training teacher, he was now working as a pattern maker in an airplane factory. As Molly talked, Mina could recall feeling as gloomy and despondent as the weather outside. She had been sure that if Molly's mother said "No," hers would, too.

On the dreary morning that Molly had delivered her bad news, the long-awaited newspaper staff trip to the Scholastic Press Associa-

tion in New York was two weeks away. The two girls had been looking forward to the excursion ever since their sophomore year, when they had started working on the lower rungs of the staff of Trenton High's prize-winning paper, *The Spectator*. Two years later, after much hard work, Mina and Molly found out that they were finally listed on the masthead for 1944-45, and they had started saving money in earnest: fifty dollars was an awful lot of money. As editor-in-chief, Mina had been particularly looking forward to the trip to the annual convention at Columbia University, and hoping to have the honor of accepting their school's twenty-first mahogany First Place plaque. In addition to the Awards Banquet itself, the two friends had already spent hours talking about the chance to attend classes at the School of Journalism with kids from all over the United States, going to see "Life With Father" at a theater on Broadway, and splurging on an elegant dinner at *the Waldorf Astoria*. With Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians, for Pete's sake. The High Life that their foolish mothers feared.

In the end, of course, it had turned out O.K. Mrs. Hemeon had called Miss Ingoldsby, the ancient spinster who was their journalism teacher, and worked out an acceptable compromise. Mina had to admit it *had* been embarrassing being the only kids who had to share a room at the hotel with their teacher, but she and Molly had gotten a lot of sympathetic comments from their friends and they had made the most of it. The 1945 First Place Award now hung in the hallway of Trenton High with the other twenty *The Spectator* had received over the years. And Guy Lombardo had been absolutely dreamy! All in all, the Great New York Adventure had been a resounding success.

Now she and Molly were both miles away from the zealous protection of their mothers. Mina straightened her skirt over her nylons and sat up straight in her seat. Not that Mother didn't mean well. But Mina was looking forward to being out from under the constant watchful eyes of so many adults. Especially Mother. She often felt like one of those miniature poodles at the circus she went to once with Auntie Lois. Perfectly groomed, every fluff of hair just so, obediently performing their tricks for the audience. Rewarded with a pat on the head if they did a good job. Mina smiled wryly. Mother would certainly have let her know how ungrateful she was if Mina had ever hinted she had such thoughts.

Mina looked out the window at the world speeding past. The terrain had become quite hilly, serene under a clear autumn sky which arched over the rolling green farmland. Along the track, the grass, in its

own determined search for light and air, had pushed its way stubbornly up through the gravel of the railroad bed.

Turning her attention back indoors, Mina noticed that across the aisle from her an elderly woman had pulled the shade down and was dozing comfortably. Her black purse was clutched by her smoothly gloved hand as the sparkling brooch pinned to her suit rose and fell with her gentle breathing. Up in front of this sleeping passenger a dark-haired man wearing glasses was holding a little girl on his knee. Dressed in a soft smocked dress with a Peter Pan collar, the child appeared to be about five years old. Mina watched the golden-curled little girl giggling in the man's arms, pointing at something outside the window. They were both smiling. A well-worn copy of *Uncle Wiggley* lay open on the seat beside them. Mina had loved that book as a child.

Daddy. The image came sharply, completely unexpected.

Mina shifted uncomfortably in her seat, turning her head to look back out the window, but her eyes kept returning to the merry twosome in the seat up ahead. The image, she realized, was a picture she had grown up with, a framed snapshot which had stood on Mother's dressing table for as long as Mina could remember. It was a picture of Daddy as a dark-haired young man in his mid-thirties, his arm around a very young version of herself, at about the age of three. In his carefully ironed white shirt and good pants, Daddy looked handsome in a craggy, gaunt kind of way, and his crinkled eyes were smiling warmly at the little figure in his lap. Perched on the front steps of Grandma and Grandpa Sexton's house, Mina was sitting on her father's left knee and gazing back at him with adoring eyes. In Daddy's hand was a copy of a small children's book, suggesting he had just paused in his reading of the story to grin tenderly at his little girl.

Mina had always been fascinated by the picture because, as much as she tried, she couldn't imagine any scene taking place like that. Not ever. Instead, when she thought about Daddy at all, it was more the way you think about a shadow—always there, but nothing real to grab on to. She'd sat across from him just about every night at dinner until she was in high school—then Daddy started working out of town, and was away from home Sunday through Thursday night—but he almost never said anything. He just looked down at his plate and shoveled the food in, even though Mother was often lying down in the living room with one of her "sick headaches," leaving the two of them alone. Mina remembered keeping her eyes focused on the worn oilcloth covering the

*“...Order a bottle of whiskey sent up
and invite the boys over?”*

kitchen table. They had turnips a lot, a hideous orange glob of mush piled on her plate. Ugh.

After dinner was over, Mina would sit back down at the kitchen table and do her homework, and Daddy would work on his stamp collection or browse through what he called his “penny dreadfuls.” That is, if Mother didn’t catch him at it and hustle him off to the cellar. Mother looked down on people who read adventure stories printed on cheap yellow paper. But the whole time Mina and Daddy almost never exchanged a word, not even a glance at each other. It was as if she were invisible. At eight o’clock, she would dutifully kiss Daddy’s rough cheek good night, go into the living room to kiss Mother and then go upstairs to bed. By the time Mina came down for breakfast the next morning, Daddy would have already had his, and would be working down-cellar or outdoors.

Mother couldn’t drive, so Daddy drove Mina places when Mother told him to. Almost every Sunday evening for the last ten years he’d driven her home from Grandma Sexton’s house after Mina had spent the weekend with Mother’s parents and her two old-maid sisters. They lived in town in an imposing Victorian home with a large yard almost twenty miles from Mina and her parents, but Daddy never asked Mina any questions about anything during the whole long, silent trip home. Sometimes before they left, however, Daddy and the aunts would sit around the upright piano in the front parlor and sing for Grandma and Grandpa. Grandpa had especially loved sitting in his leather chair by the window, closing his eyes and smiling contentedly while the three harmonized “Beautiful Dreamer.” Prim, proper Aunt Nita—or sometimes Mina—would play the piano and sing the melody in her light soprano voice; Aunt Peggy, dressed as always in her baggy stockings and flaming-red wig, would join in with her darker-toned alto, and Daddy would lean his long frame over the top of the piano and add his pleasant tenor in the middle. Daddy was different during those times. They seemed almost like a family then.

But after they were done, Mina and Daddy would get in the car, and everything would be the way it usually was. Silence. Mina thinking her own thoughts, and Daddy thinking his. Or maybe not thinking at all. Down Hamilton Avenue to turn right on Olden Avenue at Long’s Drug Store. Then past block after identical block of row houses. Grandma and Grandpa Hayes and Auntie Lois lived in one of them at #431. Then the Italian neighborhood first with their huge St. Somebody-Italian Catholic Church and a lot of tomato pie places, after that the Polish neighborhood with the pungent smell of kielbasa and cooked cabbage

and their own big St. Stanislaus Catholic Church. Past the factories belching smoke into the evening air and the acrid odor of burning rubber, and finally turn north on Pennington Road by the Odd Fellows Home. Turn left on Carleton Avenue to the creamy yellow Dutch Colonial half-way down the street. There Mother would take over, and Daddy would disappear.

Mina, when she was old enough to think about it, thought that Daddy just didn't care. But when she gazed at the picture on Mother's dressing table, she liked to imagine that at least he had loved her then.

"Is this seat taken, miss?" Mina opened her eyes to focus on a rather tall and slender woman looking down at her from the aisle. She was stylishly dressed in a belted navy suit, and her silver-streaked dark hair was accented by a small, black hat perched at a slight angle over her right eye. The woman's smooth red lips smiled warmly as she repeated, "I didn't mean to wake you. But is it O.K. if I sit here?" She nodded at the empty seat.

"Oh. Sure. It's O. K. I wasn't really sleeping—just resting my eyes a little." Mina crossed her legs and blinked to shake off the dim residue of her reverie and the vague sense of restlessness she was left with.

The attractive woman lifted her small suitcase into the rack overhead, and settled herself into the seat beside Mina. "Thank you very much. I'm glad to get a seat," she said. "I'm going all the way to Chicago. My son's just got home from the war. He lives there with his wife. How far are you going?"

"Only as far as Wooster in Ohio. I got on in Trenton."

"Wooster. I'm not sure where that is. Must be a little place. Do you have relatives there?"

"It's a little south of Cleveland, I think. Just past Akron. I've never been there before. I'll be starting college on Monday." Mina answered awkwardly but politely, hoping she appeared more grown-up than she felt.

"College! Well. And all by yourself, too. I'll bet you miss your mother and dad already. And brothers and sisters, too?" The woman smiled pleasantly.

"I'll see them at Christmas," Mina responded. "Just my mother and father, that is. I'm an only child."

"You don't say. Well, I'll bet they miss you, too." She paused as if she were going to ask another question, and then seemed to change her mind as she concluded, "Well, dear, we ought to be getting underway

pretty soon. They're almost finished putting on the steam engine." The woman opened a book in her lap and started to read.

Mina gratefully retreated back into her own thoughts. They must be in Harrisburg then. She remembered marking off the miles on the map at home. Almost a hundred and fifty miles already. She checked the small gold watch on her left wrist, a graduation present from her parents. Almost ten o'clock. Not bad. She became aware of the loud clanging as the crew exchanged the electric engine for the huge steam locomotive and its coal tender. In the distance, the great silver ribbon of what must be the Susquehanna River snaked along parallel to the tracks.

An only child. "O. A. O." That's what Auntie Lois had always called her. Her "One-And-Only." That's what Mina was, too. Only child, only niece, only grandchild. On both sides of the family. Other than a few second cousins she rarely saw, there was no one in the family anywhere close to her age; even the neighbors were old. It seemed as though most of Mina's childhood had been spent reading—and staying out of the way of the grown-ups—either at her house or at one of her grandparents'. The chance to be with people her own age was one reason she had always loved school so much. Even if Mother didn't allow her to have friends over to their house most of the time, at least she got to be around other kids at school and be invited to their houses. Their homes seemed warmer somehow, filled with people who lived fully in the present. For some reason that she couldn't explain, Mina's house and that of her Sexton grandparents always seemed either to be clinging to some distant, happier time in the past, or waiting for some indefinite future day that never came.

It was different when Mina was with Auntie Lois though. She always sparkled with the joy of the current moment, which made her seem more like a big sister than one of Mina's relatives. She was an old maid, too, like Aunt Nita and Aunt Peggy, but unlike her mother's sisters—or anyone else in the family, for that matter—Daddy's sister seemed full of life and obviously enjoyed children. She'd taught kindergarten and first grade for a long time, so Mina guessed that was why. She really *was* younger, too. Twelve years younger than Daddy. They weren't alike in any way that Mina could see.

Mother sniffed disapprovingly that Grandma and Grandpa Hayes had spoiled their plump, vivacious daughter. Mina didn't know about that, but she did know that Auntie Lois was fun. She had the best lap of anyone she knew, and a wonderful laugh that welled up like a spring out

of her ample bosom. Best of all, nothing was ever too much trouble for Auntie Lois. Trips to Long's Drugstore for ice cream, excursions to Cadwalader Park to chuckle at the monkeys. Once she even spent an entire afternoon trying to curl Mina's thick, straight hair. The result hadn't been very successful, but Auntie Lois had assured Mina that she looked *just* like Shirley Temple. And if Auntie Lois had said so, it must have been true.

She was also the one member of her family Mina could ever remember getting down on the floor and playing with her. Great, rollicking stories that got a new chapter at each visit, silly games, wonderful drawings. Mina loved to try to draw like Auntie Lois, too. Auntie Lois always encouraged her to be imaginative, and never told her to slow down and stay in the lines the way the others did.

The only real trips Mina had ever made had also been with her favorite aunt. Actually, Auntie Lois had also taken Mina on this same train trip five years ago. That time they had gone past Wooster all the way to Chicago to spend a week seeing the sights.

Mina had to admit that her aunt had changed somewhat in the last few years. All their lives, Auntie Lois and her parents had gone to Gethsemane Baptist Church, a conservative brick building on Greenwood Avenue—as had all the Sextons, as well as Mina and her family. But sometime when Mina was in elementary school, Auntie Lois came to some inexplicable turning point in her cheerful life and had been “saved,” and now she went to the Church of the Open Bible. At that time she'd also left Trenton for four years to study at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago as part of her training to serve as a missionary in Africa. However, her parents, both diabetics, had become sickly, so she had come back home to Olden Avenue instead and started teaching school again. Grandma and Grandpa Hayes had both died during the war—first Grandpa in 1939, and then Grandma a few years later. Since then, Auntie Lois had lived alone in her parents' narrow row house with the small caged back yard.

However, unless she talked about religion or politics, Auntie Lois was as much fun as ever. Mina still loved her, and looked forward to getting her letters in college. She wondered what wise words of advice “Bozo” would have for her—he was the exuberant cartoon dog with the circle around one eye that Auntie Lois had started adding to her letters to Mina when she was at Moody. She smiled, thinking of the book Auntie Lois had slipped into her trunk yesterday morning, a blue-bound copy of

An only child. "O.A.O." Her One-And-Only.

a novel by Grace Livingston Hill. The inscription read, "To my O. A. O.— Lovingly, Auntie Lois." In the corner was a drawing of Bozo with his familiar admonishing words, "Be good!"

"What are you going to study at college?"

Startled, Mina realized the woman seated beside her had closed her book, and was turned toward her, waiting for her to answer. Mina noted that she had been reading *How Green Was My Valley*. She remembered how much Mother had enjoyed that book a few years ago. That was also the only book she could ever remember Mother reading. Mother didn't even take the paper—she always scoffed and said she couldn't imagine who would want to pay to read about all that New Deal stuff. Not Mina. When she had a place of her own she had resolved that she would be surrounded by books and magazines.

"Oh," Mina paused. "Chemistry. I'm going to be a chemistry major."

"Chemistry! Well, that's a mighty ambitious goal for young lady. Have you ever thought about studying to be a teacher? Nurturing young minds is such a fine profession for a woman, don't you think?"

Mina smiled politely. Evidently even strangers thought she ought to be a teacher. That's what people back home all said, too. After all, Daddy had been a teacher, and so was Auntie Lois. But Mina had chosen chemistry partly *because* everyone thought she should be something else. Besides, she didn't particularly like children anyway.

"My son's going to go to the University after he gets settled, too." Mina realized the woman was talking to her again. "He's eligible for that G. I. Bill, you know."

"Oh, yes," Mina responded. She searched for something else to say—"What's he going to study?"

"Pharmacy," she answered proudly. "He may even have his own drugstore one day."

"That would be nice."

"Yes it would. He has such a chance now to really make something of himself. You young people have the whole world at your feet now that we've won the war. You're very lucky, you know."

Mina smiled politely again. Yes, she certainly did know. She'd been reminded of that fact hundreds of times. The woman leaned back in her seat, returning to her own thoughts.

Mina found herself thinking about the pictures on the pages of the Wooster catalogue. She had loved what she had seen there—large,

ivy-covered limestone buildings, and towering elm trees lining shady paths. However, what had really caught her attention was the picture of the annual Commencement exercises. She remembered gazing with awe at all those impressively robed faculty members processing along the long brick walkway towards the graceful serenity of Westminster Chapel. Mina had vowed then and there that this was the world where she wanted to spend her life. College. It was hard to believe she was actually on her way at last. She wondered what it would really be like.

Mina had thought a lot about the classes, but most of all, she tried to imagine what living in the dorm would be like. She was curious about her roommate, and about how it would feel to share a room with someone. Most of all, she wondered about parties and football games and things like that, although she had to admit she was a little apprehensive as well. At the very top of her class from the moment she started school, she had accumulated honor after honor and had always had a lot of confidence in herself academically. Socially, however, she continually felt much less sure of herself.

Not that she didn't have friends. But she was always aware of being different somehow, of not quite fitting in. She had always envied those who sank so comfortably and easily into the crowd, who seemed so naturally beautiful and articulate. Mina tried, but she could never quite figure out how to do it. Her friends told her she was lucky to be such a brain, but Mina could count the number of dates she'd had on one hand; her classmates had elected her "Most Ambitious Girl," but she would have rather been "Best-Dressed" or "Most Popular." Of course, without the high grades, she wouldn't even be going to college at all, especially a school as far away as Wooster. Without the full scholarship and the other awards she and her parents could never have managed \$300 a year just for tuition—not to mention another \$250 for room and board, books, and three trips back and forth on the train. After all, Daddy made less than \$2000 a year.

"Altoona, PA. Forty-five-minute stopover!" The dark-haired conductor breezed through the aisle yet again in a flash of brass buttoned efficiency.

The nasal blare of the approach horn pierced the steady rumble of the fast-moving train as the throttles were closed on the engine. Mina realized stiffly that she had been in the same position for a very long time. She was also aware that she was starving. Almost noon. No wonder. She shifted in her seat in an attempt to put some feeling back into

her legs and looked out the window again. She noticed that the earlier view of green, rolling farmland had been completely replaced by the sharply undulating contrasts of the blacks and grays and dark greens of the mountains—dark, hazy shapes which were interrupted occasionally on the higher peaks by the subtle glimmer of the first few tinges of autumn reds and golds. In places the train track sliced like a gaping wound through the outer softness of the mountains, exposing the jagged horizontal layers of naked black rock below the surface.

Mina remembered this long stop from her trip to Chicago with Auntie Lois. Her aunt had explained that the crew had to add on a second huge locomotive in order to give the train enough power to make it over the steep rises through the mountains. In the next eleven miles the train would climb over a thousand feet to the highest point on the line at the famous Horseshoe Curve. Auntie Lois had made sure she and Mina were seated in the dining car in the middle of the train at midday so they could look out the window and see both the engine and the caboose at the same time when the train came to the center of the great U of the Curve. It had been an exciting view—where you had come from and where you were going both clearly visible at the same time for a brief moment—but today Mina was sitting towards the front and couldn't afford to go into the dining car.

As the train shimmied to a complete stop on the maze of tracks in front of the roundhouse circle, Mina excused herself and stood up. She decided to go through the cars to the rest room while the train was still. It was a lot easier to walk when the motion of the train wasn't slamming her back and forth between the seats as she tried to open the sliding door between cars. As she turned to walk towards the back of the car, she noticed that two young G.I.'s were now in the seat where the father and young daughter had been. Good. She didn't want to think about Daddy any more.

It was quite crowded by now in the train, so it took a long time to get to the car where the bathroom was and back to her seat. Mina clutched her pocketbook tightly in front of herself the whole time just as Mother had cautioned her to. She had a five hundred dollar money order in it plus twenty dollars in cash, and she didn't want to take any chances. However, Mother would never have tried to plow through all the people in the aisle herself—she was terrified of polio, so she stayed clear of crowds.

Conscientiously smoothing her skirt beneath her, Mina finally

settled herself back into her seat. She noticed that the woman who had been sitting with her was gone at the moment, but she had evidently moved her suitcase down from the rack to save her spot. Mina took her sack lunch out of her own small cardboard suitcase, and carefully leaned down to replace it back under her seat. As she straightened back up a colored vendor in a jaunty red bow tie was just coming through from the dining car with a tray of wrapped sandwiches, cartons of milk, and bottles of Coca-Cola.

“Would you like anything, Miss?” The man’s teeth gleamed white in sharp contrast to his dark face as he stopped in front of her.

“A carton of milk please.”

“Here you go, Miss. That’ll be twenty cents.” Mina placed two dimes in his gloved hand. “Thank you, Miss.” He tipped his cap and moved on up the aisle.

Mina sipped slowly from the straw. It was good and cold. Twenty cents! Mother would have had a fit. Mother. Mina wondered what she was doing today. As a matter of fact, she often wondered what Mother did all day on most days. The amount of time she had on her hands you’d think the house would be perfect. But it wasn’t. Most of the time, what cleaning was done, Mina did. But there were still stacks of things everywhere, especially in the “junk bedroom” upstairs—tons of stuff Mother was always saving for something. That’s why Mina wasn’t allowed to have people over, because of the way the house looked. She wouldn’t have asked them anyway. None of her friends lived like that.

Mina set the milk down beside her and opened the brown bag in her lap. She could guess what would be in there without looking. Sure enough, the first meticulously taped parcel of waxed paper contained a peanut butter and raisin sandwich—just as it had almost every day for the last thirteen years. Occasionally Mother would make peanut butter and pickle or green pepper for a change, but not often. Mother preached long and faithfully about providing the bowel with enough fiber to maintain what she called “regularity.” And she believed much more strongly in regularity than she did in variety. Much more.

Mina took the other carefully wrapped parcels out: three carrot sticks, an apple, and two Fig Newtons for dessert. Plus an extra apple for later. It’d be dinnertime when she got to school.

With a shower of sparks and a full head of steam up, the train finally started to labor into motion again as Mina’s seat companion returned to the car. The woman replaced her suitcase in the overhead

*...but she would have rather been
"Best Dressed" or "Most Popular."*

rack, and settled herself back comfortably in her seat. She had a bottle of Coca-Cola and a sandwich of some kind in her hand.

"Well, it looks as if we're underway right on time," she announced brightly. "That looks good," she continued, nodding at Mina's lunch. "I was hungry, too."

"It is, thank you," Mina answered. "So does yours."

The woman unwrapped her sandwich and took a graceful bite of ham and cheese. Mina watched her from the side. She really was pretty, she thought. Mother could be pretty like that if she put any care into being stylish. But it wasn't so much the clothes that made this woman attractive—it was her manner. She seemed happy and optimistic, full of purpose and abundant energy. Because of the way she acted, this woman seemed young, too. Even though she was probably at least forty-five. Mother was almost forty-seven, but she seemed much older than this woman.

She knew that Mother hadn't always been the way Mina saw her most of the time: overly possessive and protective, scornful of Daddy, bitter about what life had dealt her, and constantly plagued by sick headaches. She remembered the hilarious story of how Mother and Daddy had met, for example. Daddy's family lived close to the Sextons, and they all went to the same church. Daddy first came calling on Mother's older sister Aunt Peggy, who at that time was a pretty 25 year-old flapper, the same age Daddy was. One Sunday Daddy had called on Aunt Peggy with a box of candy called a Treasure Chest—so called because of the large gold foil packet of special sweets in the center of the top layer. Mother had always had a streak of the daredevil in her as a young girl, according to family legend, and talked her more timid younger sister Aunt Nita into playing a trick on the pair courting in the front parlor. Aunt Nita draped a dark coat over Mother, who crawled stealthily down the narrow unlit hall, reached around the parlor door, and stole the gold treasure from the box on the floor beside the divan. She then sneaked the booty back to the dining room, where the two sly thieves proceeded to devour the contents amidst a gale of giggles, until caught in the act by their furious oldest sister. Daddy, however, laughed heartily at the prank, and began after that to take notice of Mother, the impish instigator. After a gentle courtship, the two of them were married two years later in 1924. Mina had seen the picture of the wedding party. Mother, dressed in a beaded calf-length dress made by Aunt Nita, was standing by Grandpa Sexton, who looked especially dapper in his new black suit and

immaculately trimmed gray handlebar mustache. Mother looked happy in a shy kind of way, and Daddy, looking as though he were having the time of his life, was grinning boyishly and peeking out sideways at the camera from behind Aunt Nita and Aunt Peggy.

Mina often wondered what had gone so wrong. The only time Mother had ever mentioned her marriage had been the evening Mina was getting dressed for her first prom during her sophomore year in high school. As Mina had stood there, radiant in her new pale pink formal, Mother had sunk down on the bed, dressed as always in her faded cotton house dress and practical laced black oxfords. She had looked at her daughter wistfully and sighed, "I hope you'll meet a good man some day, Mina. There aren't many you can trust out there."

"Why, what do you mean?" Mina had asked, confused. "There are some very nice fellows at school. And—Dick is very nice." She'd had a terrible crush on her date for the evening.

"They seem nice enough, Mina, but I'm talking about marriage," Mother had answered sharply, flipping her scraggly gray braid back over her right shoulder. "Why, I thought I could trust your father when I first met him—but I found out soon after we were married that he was chewing tobacco secretly in the cellar. Sneaking down there, and doing it right under my nose!" Her voice had quivered as she finished angrily, "I told him back when we were courting that I could never love a man who used tobacco. After he betrayed me like that, I could never believe a word he said again."

Mina remembered being so stunned she hadn't said anything. Mother hated Daddy because he had *chewed tobacco*? She wondered if he still did it. She didn't think so. Besides Daddy always did exactly what Mother said. She didn't think he'd ever talked back to her a day in his life.

After that one instance, there had never been another intimate moment of confidence like that. Mina certainly didn't bring it up. Like Daddy, apparently, she had long ago learned to keep a low profile around Mother. Eventually she had put the conversation out of her mind. She didn't think she had to worry about any man asking her to marry him anyway.

Finishing the last of her milk, Mina put the empty carton and the other trash from her lunch into her sack and threw it into the large garbage bag the porter carried by. She noticed that the woman beside her was asleep. Mina felt drowsy, too. It had been a long day already,

and they still had a ways to go. She leaned back in her seat and closed her eyes.

The steady *thunka-thunka-thunka* of the train was lulling her back, back to someplace in her memory she hadn't been in a very long time. The sound, she realized, was the saw. Daddy sawing long boards balanced between two saw horses out in the backyard at home. *Thunka-thunka-thunka*. Day after day, he was out there sawing, sawing. The pile of shavings covered the grass in a mass of sheared curls.

It was summer, Mina remembered. She was in her favorite spot, curled up reading happily in a striped lawn chair out under the maple tree in the back. Everyone called it Mina's Tree. Daddy had dug it up in the woods when it was a small sapling the spring she was born. Now Mina was eleven years old, and the tree had grown taller than the first story of the house, tall enough to provide welcome shade and a bit of a breeze on a humid July morning. The hazy heat shimmered over the vibrant orange blossoms of the trumpet vine sprawled over the trellis by the kitchen porch. The warm heavy air was filled with the buzz of cicadas and the vibrating rhythm of the saw. Daddy had been sawing and hammering off and on for a year now, and he wasn't done yet.

A clock. Mina remembered it was just a rather ordinary electric kitchen clock that had caused all of this. It was a year ago October that it had all started. Mother's birthday. Mina remembered because Daddy rarely gave Mother presents any more. But on that morning, just as Mina put her spoon into her daily dose of corn flakes, Daddy came in from outdoors and handed Mother a square parcel wrapped in plain white paper.

"Happy Birthday, Ruth," he had said, leaning forward to give Mother a tentative peck on the cheek. Daddy always seemed all arms and legs, like a new colt.

"Why, George, what have you gone and done? Thank you." Mother dubiously took the package over to the table and opened it carefully. She lifted the lid off the box, and there it was, nestled within the precise folds of tissue paper. A stainless steel clock for the kitchen. It was painted gray, and had that new streamlined look that was just starting to be popular then. Dr. Atkinson's office had one like it. "Well." Mother paused, her thin lips tilting downward slightly at the corners. "It's very," she paused again, "modern, isn't it? Thank you, George."

"I thought it was very stylish," Daddy said eagerly. "I'm glad you like it."

“Yes. Thank you.”

Mina had left for school soon after that, but when she came home the clock was still in the same spot in its open box on the kitchen table. Mina had quietly moved it to the top of the pile of stuff on the dining room table when it was time for supper. Baked spam with brown sugar on top and turnips. Daddy had been even quieter than usual at the table that night. Mother, her head covered with Vick’s Vaporub, was lying down in the living room with a headache. Then after Mina had gone to bed that night, it all started.

“George, how could you think that clock would ever do for this kitchen? It’s a *modern* clock, and we have an *old* kitchen. And the color! It doesn’t go at *all*.” It was Mother’s voice, loud and insistent, from the living room below. Daddy’s voice was next, a passive low murmur, and then Mother responded plaintively, almost hysterically, “Yes, I know the linoleum is gray and blue, but not *that* shade. For heaven’s sake, George!” It went on and on in the same way until Mina finally put her pillow over her ears and fell asleep. She hated going to sleep to the sound of their fighting, but she was used to it.

The next morning, Friday, they were at it again down in the kitchen before Mina was dressed, until Daddy slammed the kitchen door and went off to work. When Mina came downstairs, Mother was still in her dingy pink chenille bathrobe and scuffed felt slippers. Her face was streaked red from crying. Mina, silent, managed to get her corn flakes down before they got too soggy and escaped out the back door to school. For once she was glad she was spending the weekend as usual with Grandma and Grandpa Sexton. Even if there wasn’t much to do there besides read and “Sit like a lady, Mina!” Grandma was a fountain of aphorisms and that was her favorite. The prospect of sitting up straight for an entire weekend, however, seemed infinitely better than what was going on at home.

When Mina got back home from Grandma’s on Sunday evening, however, everything was startlingly different. Mother, her gray-streaked dark hair pinned up in a neat bun, was dressed in her new soft flowered house dress from Sears Roebuck. She was smiling, and looked quite pretty. And Daddy! Daddy was whistling.

They had even sat around the radio by the sideboard in the dining room that night and listened to “Jack Benny.” Just like a real family. On the dining room table was the reason for the big change. It was strewn with architectural drawings Daddy had done of the extensive

She had taken the list of "Suggested Items For Freshman Girls," and followed it to the letter.

remodeling job for the new kitchen. A suitable setting for the new clock.

The next night the cheerful atmosphere still reigned. Mother had fixed broiled lamb chops for supper with mint jelly, boiled potatoes, and Harvard beets. She had even splurged on a box of Royal chocolate pudding for dessert. It was delicious. Daddy and Mina both told her so. That evening, and for most evenings all that fall and well into the next year the planning went on. Daddy did drawings to submit for Mother's approval; Mother would add her comments, and the process would be repeated all over again.

Mother was never happier than when she was planning and supervising a new project. Daddy was never happier than when Mother was in a good mood.

When Daddy finally finished all the work two years later, it was a kitchen that could have been featured in the pages of *House Beautiful*. The walls were a deep peach, accented with navy, shades meticulously chosen and mixed by Mother. Every curve and crevice of the table and chairs had been completely sanded and repainted peach with gray and navy trim. Most time-consuming of all, Daddy had carefully crafted new gray built-in cabinets for the whole west wall, in addition to a painstakingly scalloped valance above the window over the sink. And there in the center of the valance, like a crown jewel on display for all the world to see, hung the clock. It was certainly a modern kitchen now. Even if they did still have an icebox instead of a refrigerator.

The new kitchen had always been Mina's favorite room. Not only was it the only part of her house that looked at all glamorous, but, even though the area had been torn up for two solid years, she had happy memories about the process. It was the only time she could remember Mother and Daddy being in a cheerful, teasing mood for such a long period of time.

And all because of a clock.

In her hazy half-sleep Mina began to be conscious of the gradual slowing of the *thunka-thunka-thunka* of the train. She stirred to a more upright position, and opened her eyes. A large number of passengers were moving around and getting their luggage together. They must be in Pittsburgh at last. Along the edge of the track she could see the huge fires of the steel mills shooting their flames up into the soot-filled afternoon sky.

The train thumped and jolted as the crew took off the second engine. They were past the mountains now, and no longer needed the

extra power. If she strained her eyes far towards the back of the train she could see the dark ridges of the Alleghenies receding in the distance. In the other direction was Ohio, home for the next four years.

The sudden sound behind her made Mina jump. After her heart stopped pounding, she turned her head and realized that someone had slammed the window with a rolled-up newspaper; now the rather squashed body of a dead wasp was permanently imprinted on the glass. Evidently it had gotten in while the other passengers were boarding. They were bad this time of the year. Mina chuckled to herself. Mother would certainly never have taken care of a mere wasp in such an abrupt and untidy manner. Whenever a wasp got into the house at home Mother would immediately shoo everyone else out of the room, grab her kitchen shears, and close the door. Then, scissors poised high in the air like a triumphant warrior, she chased the unfortunate creature around and around until it paused and lit for a moment. At that precise instant, moving quickly in for the finish, Mother opened her scissors directly over the thin place where the wasp's thorax connected to its abdomen. With one deft snip it would all be over. Mother had never had a wasp get the better of her yet.

Mother had so many sides to her, Mina thought. She wondered if she'd ever understand the way she felt about her. Her attention could be smothering, and she could be sharp and unkind. Yet she was fun sometimes, too. Not like Auntie Lois, but still fun in a practical, organized fashion. Mina wasn't sure about Daddy, but she knew Mother loved her in her own way. She thought of the meticulously packed trunks and three suitcases Daddy had helped her put on the train that morning. Every single item Mina owned was carefully identified with name labels Mother had sewn in by hand, wrapped in tissue paper, and placed neatly and perfectly into its allotted spot. Mother had spent most of the summer getting Mina ready for college. She had taken the list of "Suggested Items For Freshman Girls," and followed it to the letter.

It actually wasn't at all surprising, Mina thought wryly, that her classmates had elected her "Most Ambitious Girl." After all, she smiled to herself, she had certainly been the fastidiously tended product of "Most Ambitious Mother." Not that she didn't have high standards for herself. But Mother had seen to it that the goals Mina set were lofty from the very beginning. She had made it very clear to her daughter that merely doing her best wasn't enough; Mina had to be better than anyone else. She remembered sitting at the kitchen table as a young girl copying and

recopying her ink assignments: Mother wouldn't let her off the hook until they were perfect. Sometimes, in obvious frustration, Mother would give up on her and write it herself.

Fortunately when Mina got to high school she moved out of the realm of Mother's narrow experience. Then, as long as she kept at the top of the class, Mother stayed out of it. Mother didn't have to worry about pushing Mina to excel by then though—it had become a habit for her. Mother had been an indifferent student herself, and had taken the Commercial Course in high school. That meant she could have been a secretary. She should have been, Mina thought, she would have been a perfect one. But Mother scoffed at women who took time away from their responsibilities at home to work.

Of course, Mother had high expectations for everyone. Mina thought that was the real reason why Mother seemed to dislike Daddy so much. It *couldn't* just be the tobacco. Daddy just didn't have any ambition, Mother said. Of course, Mother wasn't willing just to let it go at that. During high school, while Daddy was gone during the week at the airplane factory in north Jersey, Mother had found a picture in a magazine of a teddy bear poised at the foot of a ladder. She had had Mina copy it, along with a message she had composed about climbing the ladder of success, and enclosed it with the letter she wrote to Daddy. Every few weeks, Mina had to draw another bear, each time a little higher on the ladder, and Mother would send it off to Daddy. Mina never knew what Daddy thought of the pictures, but she did know she despised being Mother's messenger. But she hadn't had the courage to disobey Mother directly.

Mina often thought that Mother was the one in the family who had the ambition.

"Akron, Ohio!" This conductor was older, with silvery hair and a neatly clipped mustache. Mina realized that they must have switched crews in Pittsburgh. The woman beside her put a bookmark in her book and closed it in her lap. It looked as though she only had about fifty pages to go.

"Well, this is it for you, isn't it?" She smiled warmly at Mina. Mina wondered if she smiled that way at her son in Chicago. It was a nice smile.

"Almost," Mina responded. "Next stop."

"Are you nervous?"

"Just a little. Not much though." Mina reached under the seat to

pull her suitcase out. The train had started up again. She checked her watch. Almost six o'clock. No wonder she was feeling hungry again.

"Don't you worry. You'll be just fine. You look like a young lady who can take care of herself," the woman added kindly.

"I can," Mina replied steadily. "I hope you have a nice visit with your son, too."

"Thank you. Good luck to you, dear." She opened her book again.

Mina thought of the poster on the wall beside the ticket agent's desk early that morning in Trenton—it was one of the signs still left from the effects of the war, a picture of a crowded train station full of civilians. In large block letters across the bottom it proclaimed, "Needless travel interferes with the war effort." Then in big white letters across the top was the question: "IS YOUR TRIP NECESSARY?" Yes, it is, Mina thought. It certainly is.

With a rush of steam, the train was slowing down again. The horn sounded, as the conductor came briskly through the aisle. "Wooster, Ohio!"

Soon Mina was standing on the platform with her three suitcases beside her. She clutched her pocketbook tightly against the center of her body, and smoothed her skirt over her legs. She was pleased that her hair still felt wavy after all this time. All around her there was a flurry of activity. A couple of young men were loading the trunks into a truck to take them to campus. Mina realized that six other students had been on her train, two boys and four girls. Above her the blue vault of the sky was streaked with pink. And there was no gray haze to interrupt the view. She turned to look back towards the track just as the porter climbed back onto the train and closed the door. For just a brief moment the great steel locomotive seemed to hover uncertainly in its tracks in the September twilight. Then, with a large burst of steam, it hurried off without hesitation to the next stop, leaving a drifting cloud of smoke and a lingering wakefulness behind.

*...she had certainly been the fastidiously
tended product of "Most Ambitious Mother."*

artists & authors

{ *biographies* }

Jennifer Baynes ~ Commercial and fine art photographer, Indianapolis native, holds a BFA in Photography from Indiana University and is currently continuing studies at IUPUI.

Carol Durbin ~ A poet and sophomore Geology major at IUPUI. "My passion for Science does not keep me from my love for poetry."

Annette Echard ~ A Chicago native, she is a singer, visual artist, and freshman attending IUPUI.

Jack C. Hartigan ~ The on again, off again Herron School of Art visual artist is from Vincennes, Indiana, and has been living and creating in Indianapolis the last five years while working for various local/state wide arts organizations. "My creative endeavors have enabled me to experience a versatile educational growth in the unique but limited arts business world of Indianapolis, exposing me to elitist art snobs." His photography is in a group exhibit currently touring Indiana museums and galleries.

Rene Hartloff ~ A 25 year old poet and freshman double majoring in English and Psychology at IUPUI. "I owe all my success to my mother."

Kristi Jensen ~ Poet and a part-time senior English major, Psychology minor at IUPUI, she plans to continue master studies in Social Work or English. "Poetry has always been a part of my life as long as I can remember. It began with just writing down thoughts and carried through to creating a poem with pure inspiration."

Kelly K. Jones ~ Writer and Editorial Assistant for the Journal of Teaching Writing, pursuing bachelors degrees in English and French. Past achievements include Outstanding Upperclass Scholarship, Writing Fellow, and Preston Eagleson Award, IUPUI, has been published by the Indiana Historical Society, and is a veteran of the USAF. "My proudest accomplishment is raising my kids to their teenage years."

Diantha Daniels Kesling ~ Writer and senior English major at IUPUI, continuing with course work for Secondary Certification. Past achievements include 2nd prize award for essay from the Purdue Literary Awards, has been published previously in *The Fine Print*, holds a BA in Dance and is a ballet instructor.

J. Brice Mabry ~ Fiction writer and sophomore Chemistry major at IUPUI. "I enjoy writing and hope to incorporate this into my career."

Marcus Manning ~ A writer and student attending IUPUI.

John Matthew ~ A writer who lives and studies in Indianapolis.

Laura McPhee ~ Writer, senior English major at IUPUI, and President of the IUPUI English Club. Her past achievements include Outstanding Award for Poetry from the English Department, IUPUI, and has published previously in *genesis* and *The Fine Print*.

Olaf Jens Olsen ~ Visual artist and part-time linguist for the deaf community, Olaf is an Indianapolis native who is currently attending the Herron School of Art pursuing a degree in Arts Education.

Kevin A. Stella ~ A poet and junior English major at IU-Bloomington. "I enjoy reading and writing poetry not so much because of the escape it may often provide, but because of the understanding and insight to life it often gives."

~ prospectus ~

Writers' manuscripts & visual artists' works are invited from all persons attending IUPUI at any time during the last eighteen months for publication in *genesis*. Working deadline is February 26, 1996 for the spring issue.

Manuscripts of essays, one-act plays, fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and art or literary criticism may be submitted on any topic before the above deadline. Manuscripts must be typed; prose pieces should be double spaced, classified as either fiction or nonfiction, with a suggested length of no longer than 2,500 words. No more than ten pieces should be submitted for each issue by one author. Please include a separate title sheet containing the author's name, address, telephone, and a short biography. All manuscripts are considered by a student editorial board. Names should not be directly on the manuscript, as authorship is not revealed to the board until the manuscript has been accepted. Authors will be notified of acceptance prior to publication, submission will be considered authorization for publication. Please do not submit work being considered for other publications. Selected manuscripts may be requested on computer disc for publication process.

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Artworks of any type may be submitted before the above deadline. Submissions should be camera-ready. Photographers are encouraged, but slides of all media will be accepted. No more than ten pieces should be submitted for each issue by one artist. Please identify each piece with the title, actual dimensions, artists name, address, telephone, and a short biography. Artists will be notified of acceptance prior to publication. All original artwork or slides will be returned.

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Office of the Dean
Herron School of Art, IUPUI
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-1414

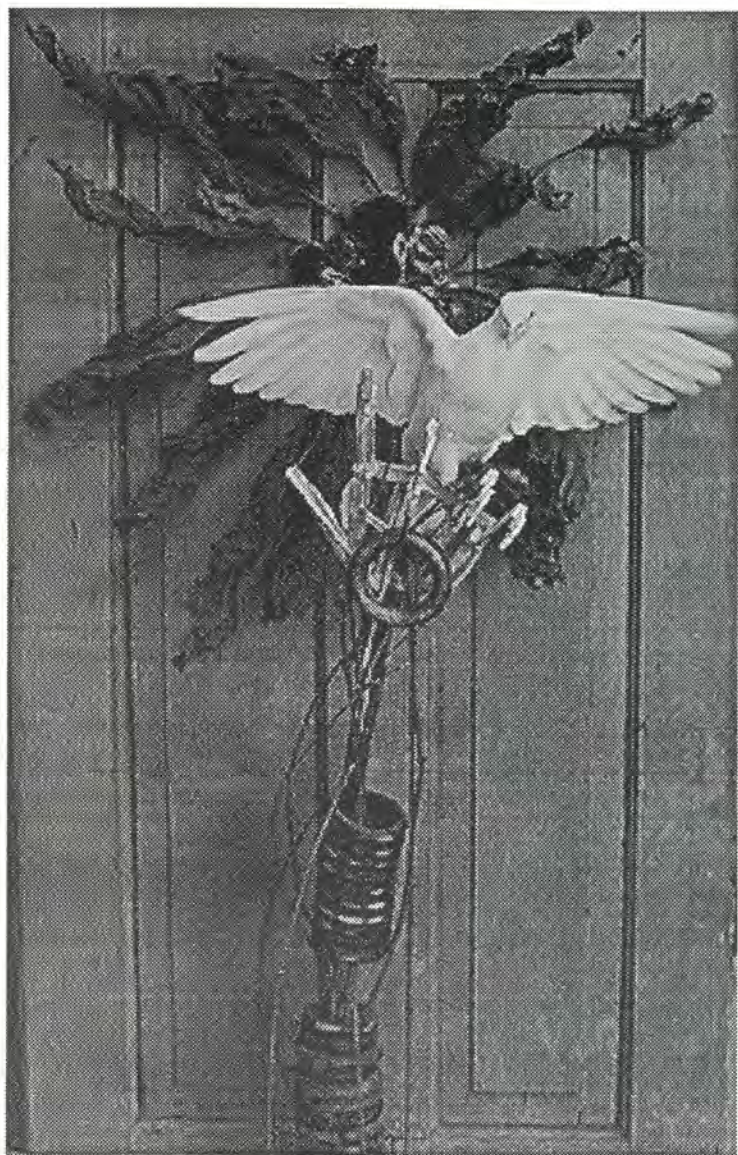
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genesis is seeking new board members to participate in constructive feedback about the journal for the spring issue. If you are interested, please submit a resume including your name, address, phone, e-mail, fax, class standing with GPA, and a statement about you and your interests in this publication before February 1, 1996 to:

Geneva Ballard, Faculty Advisor
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Birds Eye View I
4"x 6 1/4", sepia tone photograph
Jack C. Hartigan



Portrait of Erin III
5"x7", Black & White Photography
Jack C. Hartigan



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