

genesis fall 2006



Volume 38 Issue 2

The *genesis* Editorial Staff

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Jim Powell

Senior Editors:

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Laura Epps
Laura Polley
Jesika St. Clair
Rachel Thompson
Oren Wagner

W280

Apprentices:

Matt Davis
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Cover: Best of Art

Steam Streets by Kimberly Balding
5" x 7" Photograph

Editors' Note

So, what has happened to the Spring 2006 issue? Like Billy Pilgrim from Slaughterhouse Five, we at *genesis* have slipped beyond the constraints of time.

We have forgone our Spring 2006 issue to avoid further confusion. From now on, our issues will be named according to the semester in which they are released. All submissions, however, are from the previous semester.

Just as we have lost ourselves on the steps of time, we encourage our readers to lose themselves on their journey through these pages—from prose poems to powerful digital images, from mosaic memoirs to intimate photo studies.

IUPUI is growing and becoming more diverse each year. This diversity is reflected on these pages. The variety of submissions we receive continues to amaze us. We hope the works in this issue amaze and enthrall you and bring inspiration and hours of enjoyment. We thank you and look forward to new works of poetry, prose, and art for our Spring 2007 issue.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank:

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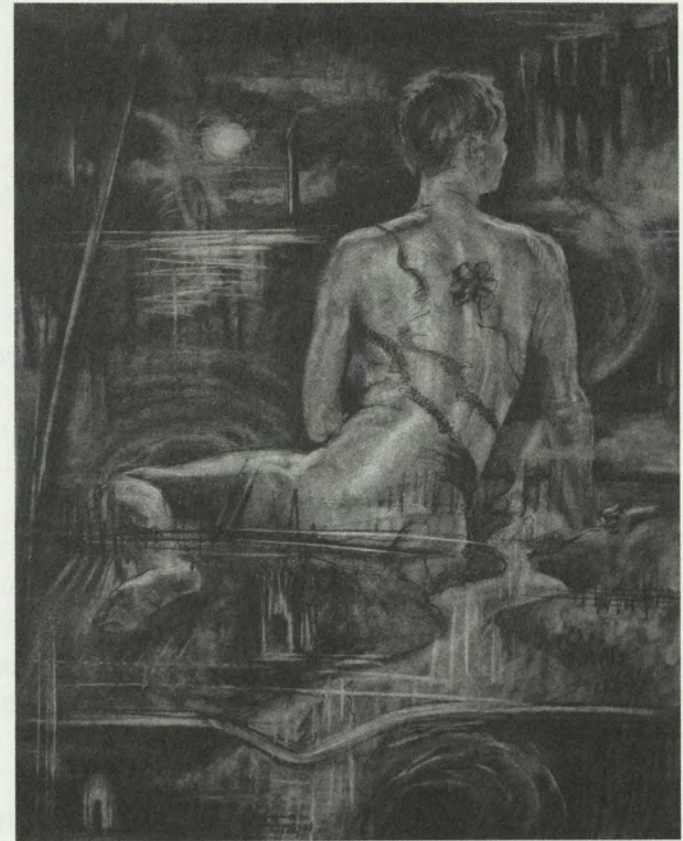
genesis the origin or coming into being of anything; development into being, especially by growth or evolution; the process or mode of origin <the ~ of a book>

genesis

Literary and Art Magazine of
Indiana University
School of Liberal Arts
at IUPUI

Volume 38 Issue 2

Fall 2006



Moonlight Fantasy by Jean Dan
24" x 18" Charcoal on Paper

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Friends of *genesis*,

genesis has made some great strides in recent years. In addition to establishing a course around the writing, editing, and production of the magazine (W280 Literary Editing and Publishing), we have created a more dynamic magazine, offering dramatic color options on the covers and artistic placement of both art and writing.

Looking forward, we plan to establish an interactive website that will offer a platform for a greater variety of artistic forms. With this option we will be able to publish even more of IUPUI's talent and stretch our creative reach beyond campus. We have big dreams and hope to fulfill them in the coming years.

In W280, we have learned what we value in writing and art, as well as why we value it. We have learned the ethics and politics involved in choosing pieces for publication. We have learned how to work in committees with respect and open minds. Ultimately, we have learned how to showcase the writing and artwork that best exemplifies the result of thoughtful craft.

But *genesis* would be nowhere without the hearts and imaginations of its contributors and readers, and the support of those who continue to care for the magazine, IUPUI, and the literary and visual arts. We thank you for being a part of the past, present, and future *genesis* family. The students who produce this work ask that you help make our dreams possible by contributing to the *genesis* fund. Gifts in support of *genesis* have allowed us to fund our "best of" prizes. Now we are looking even further as we hope to bring *genesis* to the internet, where students' work can be shared more broadly.

We invite you to join those listed here as "Friends of *genesis*" with your gift today. Gift checks may be made payable to IU Foundation/*genesis* Fund and mailed to the IU Foundation at 950 North Meridian Street #250, Indianapolis, Indiana 46204. Or you may go to the IU School of Liberal Arts website, <http://www.liberalarts.iupui.edu>, and make your gift on-line by clicking on the "Give Now" button.

Sincerely yours,
The Editors of *genesis*

Our special thanks to those who have contributed financially to the magazine since 2001:

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Highland, Indiana 2001 by Clint Smith

Patches of autumn leaves
chattering across the street
at sundown, in a small town where the light changes
for an empty intersection.

On the widower's porch: a witch,
a vampire (complete with widow's peak),
and a little phantom fashioned from a sheet
offer the choice of *trick or treat*.
The old one answers from within the pitch,

struggles to hold the screen door open
with his shoulder, while his liver-spotted hand
drops what he has in the buckets
shaped like jack-o-lanterns.

The one-night nightmares thank him
from under this year's make believe and disappear
into what's left of October—the ghost's sheet
trailing like a *genuine apparition*,

it occurs to the man as he stands, hand
loyal to the door, spyglass eyes: in a trance
as he tunes into the werewolf's howl resonating
down the Elm-lined lane, waiting for one more chance
to make these creatures happy—waiting
for the next gang of ghouls to arrive.

Holidays
by Monica Khurana

let's get drunk with a little nutmeg
that way we won't have to question
which came first, the misery or the joy



Snow Falling in February by Wade Terrell Tharp
5" x 7.5" Photograph

Connections by Alan Williams

The razor blade hovered over my wrist.

My hand shook, turning the razor's edge into a blur.

Don't chicken out now, stupid. This is what you want, right? It's your way out. You don't have to deal with it anymore. You'll stop hurting. Just quit stalling.

"Cory?" My mother's voice floated through the door.

"Cory, are you all right in there? Won't you come out?" The irony of those words.

Mom must've found the note. I should've kept it in here with me so that they wouldn't know before I was done. Hindsight sucks.

"Cory, unlock the door." My father this time. "We need to talk. This note—what's this about?"

Funny, I thought it was obvious. I failed them. I wasn't what they wanted me to be. I knew Dad wouldn't be able to handle it. I figured it was easier to do this now than live like a failure for the rest of my life.

I set the blade against my wrist, feeling the cool sharpness of its edge pressing into my flesh.

"Cory, don't make me break down this door." Dad had a you-don't-want-me-to-do-something-drastic tone. Bullshit. He was always putting me down. Always rubbing it in my face when he thought I failed. At least I'd finally succeed in something. *So long, Dad. Can't say it's been fun.*

"Cory, we just want to talk to you about this. Please, open the door." My mother, concerned.

Wish I had another way, Mom, but I can't think of any.

"Goodbye," I whispered.

Pounding on the door. Probably Dad. More shouting. I tuned out the words. I took a deep breath and slashed.

*

Megan caught me running my finger across the stitches again. "You probably won't have much of a scar."

I leaned on the railing, looking across the river. "Doesn't matter," I said. "Scars are inside, too."

She put her arm around my waist. She always did things like that. Treated me like a human being. I didn't deserve it. "Why'd you do it? You haven't said anything about it. Your mom and dad won't tell me. Your dad acts like I'm asking him about mortal sins or something."

"What do you care?"

"I'm your friend."

I pulled away. "You shouldn't be."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't deserve friends." I walked off.

How do you tell someone that you don't feel like you can have friends because you can't even love yourself?

*

"Where are you going?" Dad was in the doorway. I kept packing.

"Away."

"That isn't an answer."

"It's all you get." I zipped up the bag.

"Your mother and I want to talk to you about all this."

"About what? There's nothing to say. I'm leaving. I'll stay with friends. You won't have to look at me anymore. That's what

you want, right?”

Mom started crying behind Dad. Dad grabbed my arm. “Look at me when I’m talking to you, you ungrateful little—”

I swung around, batting his arm away. “I’m getting out of your life because I’m not what you want me to be, so *get out of my life, too!* I’m not staying where I have to feel like a god-damn failure every day of my life!”

Dad’s face was bright red. “You little bastard! How dare you talk to your mother and me after—”

“After what? All the times you screamed at me for wanting to be me and not you? All the times you said that *real* men don’t draw or play music? All the times you found something wrong with me just because of who I am and what I am? All the times you made it pretty damn clear what you think of people like me?”

“They are *not* like you! You’re just confused!”

“Confused?” I heard ice crackle in my voice. “I’m not confused, Dad. I’m *gay*.” I held up my wrist, turning the three-month-old scar to his face. “That’s what *this* is about, remember?” I grabbed my bag, pushed out of the room. Out of my family’s life.

I was sixteen.

*

I turned up my collar when the shelter’s open door let the wind in. The man who walked in looked like he was in his fifties, sweating even though it was below freezing outside, and looked the



The Storm that Hit Us by Jean Dan
22" x 30" Charcoal on Paper

way people look when someone else says, “He’s well-fed,” when what they mean is “He’s a fat pig.”

He looked around and then walked up to me. “How much?”

“What?” I knew what he meant. I just didn’t want to believe it was happening again.

“A hundred?”

“I’m tryin’ to sleep, mister,” I said, trying to block it out.

He didn’t let up. “One-fifty, and I’ll let

you stay in the room all night.”

I knew I shouldn’t, but cash and a warm room won out for the fourth time that month. “Deal,” I said, grabbing what was left of my bag.

Happy birthday to me. I was seventeen.

*

I was flipping burgers. It wasn’t much, but it was a real job instead of hustling.

Didn’t take long for one of my coworkers to make a pass at me. Didn’t take long for the manager, either. I didn’t really like either of them, but I did it anyway. Maybe I just thought it’d be better than being lonely all the time. But it wasn’t.

When I stopped putting out, the manager got pissed and found all sorts of things to bitch me out for. I quit before he could fire me. I got sick of these guys wanting in my pants when I didn’t give a shit about them.

*

God, to be fifteen again. Scary, thinking like that at my age.

They called it a “studio apartment.” I called it a “friggin’ rat trap.” I also called it home. It wasn’t the shelter, anyway.

It had its own problems, like the first time I brought a guy home. You could see it in his eyes—he was afraid to take anything off because he was sure something would bite him. It was bad. Neither one of us could get off. I decided not to take anyone

back there again unless I didn’t have a choice. Sometimes I didn’t, so I kept the lights low.

I brought a few back. I spent the night with a lot more at their places.

I was still lonely.

*

I was flipping burgers again, somewhere else, when I got the art supplies. The assistant manager was this big flaming queen, but he seemed pretty nice. When he gave me the stuff—canvas, brushes, pigments—I thought for sure he was trying to get me into bed and I said so.

“Oh, no,” he said. “I saw you drawing on your breaks, thought you might like to try working with paints. You have talent and you shouldn’t waste it.”

“Whatcha want for this stuff?”

“Nothing.” He noticed my look. “Yeah, I know, most guys probably give you stuff if they want you in bed, but I’m not interested. I’ve already got a husband and don’t need another one.”

We became friends. He was the first gay man who liked me for me and not for some kind of fuck fest.

Then I turned eighteen.

*

“Where are you going?”

I looked back at the bed and the guy on it. He was naked on top of the sheets. “Gotta work in the morning.”

He grabbed my hand. “No, don’t go. Stay here with me.”

He looked lower on my body. I knew he was staring at my ribs.

“You probably don’t have anywhere to stay anyway.”

I yanked my hand away. “I have my own place,” I shot back. “I don’t need any fuckin’ charity. I wanted a good time.”

He looked hurt. He actually looked hurt. “Didn’t you have a good time?”

I slipped on my jeans. I didn’t bother with underwear anymore. “Guess I just can’t have one.” I grabbed my shoes and walked out the door.

I would be nineteen in a few days.

*

The card arrived just after my birthday. *Dear Cory, Mom wrote, I got your address from Megan. I wanted to let you know that Dad is better now. You can come home. Please don’t stay away. I miss you.*

“Sorry, Mom,” I muttered, ripping the card in half. “I can’t go through that again. I just can’t.”

*

I heard through my assistant manager that someone was finally starting a gay youth group. I walked in the building as the woman up front finished talking.

“—and on that note, let’s break up for a bit so you can meet each other. Anyone who’s interested in some of the activities I mentioned should come up and see me or check out the sign-up sheets.”

I looked around the room as the other kids got up. There weren’t many of us, maybe a dozen, and most of them looked a lot younger than I was. They also looked like they had better lives than I did.

“What’s your name?” I turned around and saw another boy behind me. He was a lot cuter than the guys I’d been with lately, but he looked so young. Was I ever that young?

I nodded at him. “Cory.”

“Terry. Nice to meet you.” We shook hands. “How old are you?” he asked. “I’m fifteen.”

“I’ll be twenty next month.” *God, to be fifteen again. Scary,*

thinking like that at my age.

“You here with anybody?” I shook my head. “C’mon, then. I’ll introduce you to my friends.” He pulled me over to three or four others, and I was suddenly trying to remember names and faces.

After the meeting broke up, Terry and his friends took me somewhere to get something to eat, and I met more of his friends. Their lives weren’t as great as I thought. Some of them were from broken homes, scared to come out. Some of them were out and putting up with ‘phobes at school, at home, all over. There was one couple—they were both sixteen, I think—but most of them jumped from one boyfriend or girlfriend to the next because things never worked out for long. Some of the breakups were bad, but they still talked to each other because they didn’t feel like they had anyone else. The way I usually felt.

I went back to my hole-in-the-wall that night, and for the first time in three years I didn’t feel so alone. ■



Street Light by Kimberly Balding
17" x 25" Photograph

Indianapolis Sunrise by Beth Mink

My chest is chilled from standing
on the foundry roof, wrapping my fingers
on the blue plastic of the travel cup,
sucking hot coffee through the hole in the lid.
I kick gravel loose from the roof tar, moving
to keep warm. Pink glimmers on the dark rim
of the horizon. No cars move down below.
I am the only person in the city watching.
Except for another electrician across the city
standing on the roof by the vent fan
kicking gravel.



Relaxing in the Forbidden City by Nicholas Hayden Wiesinger
4" x 6" Silver Gelatin Print

June 1963 by Kay Castaneda

School was out for the summer in Indianapolis, Indiana.
Our home on Alice Street looked like all the others, white aluminum siding
and green-striped awnings so the sun wouldn't fade our shag carpet.
My sister Josie and I roamed the streets, never scared until we heard the train whistle
blow loud as it rumbled, shook the house, rattled the windows,
made the Venetian blind cords dance from side to side.
Josie and I waited while the train passed until we could see
the conductor wave from the very last car, the red one.

I grew tired of games, playing movie star with Mommy's silk scarves
wrapped around our heads and tied with knots so tight we couldn't move.
No! You can't be Elizabeth Taylor. I am. You be Sandra Dee.
You can wear sunglasses, drive a convertible. But Josie cried.

I'd never noticed the paper boy until he threw that rolled-up tube on our porch.
He laughed at our costumes, me in Mommy's high heels,
Josie with rhinestone earrings. I ran to find the paper, keep it safe
for Daddy to read. But the rubber band snapped as it fell from my hands.

On the front page of the *Times* a picture caught my eye. A dead man.
But this was not a body like I'd ever seen.
Not like grandfather sleeping when I was three.
Not like the old lady when they carried her from her house in her gown.
Not like my tiger-striped cat, stiff, eyes open, spit drooling from its open mouth.

This body was hidden in black plastic. Four soldiers carried this boy in a bag,
their dog tags shining, swinging as they hoisted him high up into the arms
reaching out of the door of the helicopter. And on its side in big black letters, U.S.A.
Under the photo, the caption read *American soldier heads for home*.

I tried to read about the place he was leaving. Vietnam.
There were trees in the picture, not like our trees in Indiana,
but with large wavy leaves and a man with tiny eyes standing nearby.
I yelled at Josie, told her stop being an actress, made her cry.
I laid the paper on Daddy's chair. All day I walked past it, looking at the picture.
From then on, I searched for those boys and this new kind of death.

That summer, I told Josie we could go to Vietnam
if we dug far enough down in the earth. The two of us
put our ears to the railroad tracks until the train came again.
When the conductor waved, we bowed from the waist like Asian women.
He grinned at us but I knew he had a secret.
He was carrying boys in black bags to their homes.



Untitled by Stephanie Means
10" x 8" Silver Gelatin Print

Cane Cutters by Gaylie R. Cotton

Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent are subjected to government policies that reflect racial discrimination and xenophobia. Many Haitians end up working for low or no wages in Dominican Republic sugarcane plantations.

The *buscones* came
with neither whips nor chains
but with beguiling words
honorable smiles and promises
of honest work honest pay
and I in my hunger
followed in hopes of a better life
instead I am stripped
of my dignity of my identity
and uniformed in rags and a machete.

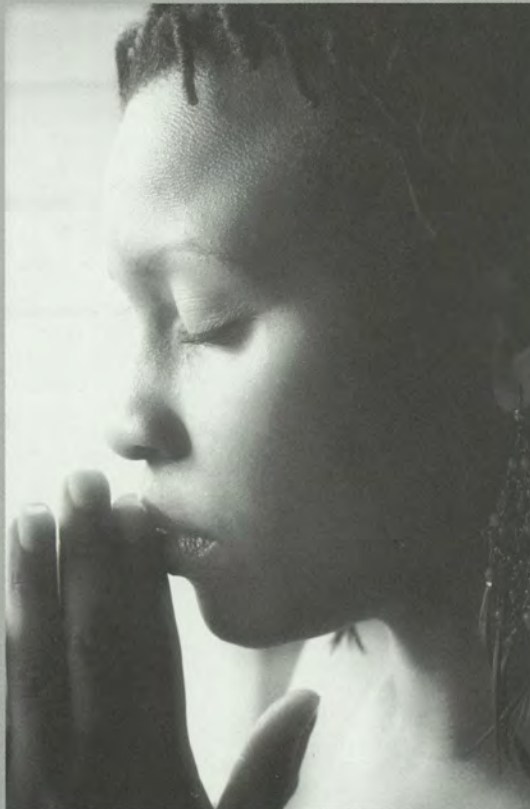
My third world enslavement
enhances the coffers of the first
makes fat those whose economy
is fueled by the labor and brine
that washes from my skin.

The sweet of their drink
the frilly decadence of cake
saccharine cream whipped and spread
crafted from white gold granules
that gleam contrary
to my black complexion
their riches extracted
from the milky prize hidden
within green brown stalks
of Dominican sugarcane.

Money and gold
is their entitlement
blistered hands and useless *vales*
for government commissary are mine
for the two-ton quota I die
daily to meet during *zafra*.

With boastful arrogance
they lavish their children
with magnificent houses
that blaze white in the sun
that extract life from my bones
as I toil sunup to sundown
to pay rent for a space
of dust sticks and tin.

My children gnaw
on cane roots
instead of fresh milk
to quiet the hunger
screaming from within their bellies.



Like sharp machetes
befalling the woody stalks
Guardacampestres steal away
in the darkness to the *bateyes*
to fulfill putrid lusts
on little girls
seizing the sweetness
between their teeth
crushing young purity
sheathed tight amid quivering legs.

And although I am millions
strong generations deep
survivor of Trujillo's bloodletting
this land denies my existence
my genealogy my family tree
I am born *persona non grata*
pulled from the rich fertile earth
a pest and cast like dried weeds
into the flaming inferno to smote
out the declaration of my birth.

I am sun-kissed
a nation fettered in chains
who brings the sugar
added to coffee steaming black
the sweet dusting of berries
bursting forth with juice
sugar soiled by black blood
My name is Haiti
persona non grata
laboring the fields
of Dominican sugarcane.

Black Art by Brandon Anderson
Photograph

St. Lucy, Barbados by Kimberly L. Holly

Today I recaptured memories
of tranquil days,
eating sea grapes until my hands
stain purple from their juice.

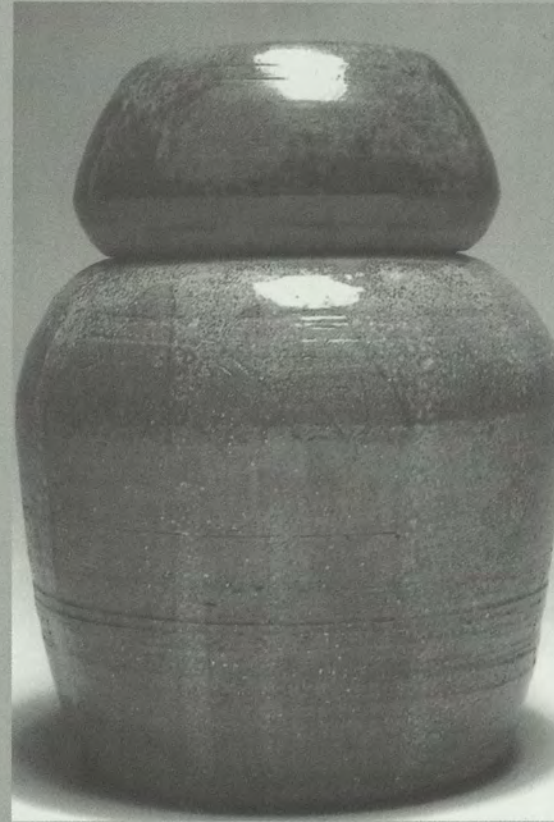
I've spent days standing
in knee-deep water
between the mountainous coasts
of this place, searching my reflection
finding only green seashells that shifted

in the wake of troubled sand and coral that floated
to the top of the luminous ripples,
the keepers of my island's history.
I have traveled far, from these beaches

where I was born, to concrete cities. I have walked paths
frozen by sharp hail, grim snowstorms, and longed
for the touch of sand, warm sand that slipped between my toes.
I have lived in cold shadowy houses, my constant anxiety,

where the silent boredom of rain on rooftops is tedious,
tiresome. My solace cannot be found in solid
rivers or streams. Only in the thunderous
sound of the ocean that provokes life to pound

and respire in me.
I remember these shores
and the eggs I plucked from the backs of sea roaches,
sucked them until they dissolved into my tongue.



Ginger Jar by Megan Wells
4.75" x 3.5" Red Clay and Glaze

I remember the savored sourness of the ackee fruit,
and the spring that flowed from my mouth
and emptied out onto my chin.
I remember sipping sweet nectar

from guavas and sugarcane.
The waves, how they fingered their way
against salt-soaked logs and brackish rocks
as in reverence to a god.

I raced to dip my toes in the soft
of the white spume as the tides returned home.
Here, as I stand in remembrance
of this place, this St. Lucy—
It remains.

Six West Pacific Avenue by Lindsay Fernung

California was a myth
that we shattered just by
crossing the border;
we picked up a tumbleweed in the parking lot of Denny's
somewhere in New Mexico and kept it
crumbling on the dashboard.
That day hot and windless outside Needles.
The woman in the booth, her hair was too high
and she was so bored but she asked
got any fruit in the car?
Everyone laughed and pointed at me,
her openmouth stare the only moist thing for miles
while we drove away.

My first night in California was the kind of hot
you can't close your teeth around.
Dry desert everywhere and bruised, blackeyed sky.
We poured giddy water on the sidewalk to see it evaporate,
eager for morning and the north
where maybe beautiful weather wasn't just a story.
But everything in California is made up
by a little girl in the Midwest wearing all pink,
standing on the sink and painting her secret face
with Mom's stolen rouges,
dreaming.

These are the stories I never told
about California.

One: the book of T.S. Eliot we kept on the bathroom sink
with his profile dark on the cover
was to comfort us since we knew
J. Alfred and the hollow men,
they towered and thundered in our beds most nights.

Two: he and I conspired to
treat my sadness like a sickness,
drowned my fear by calling in sick and soaking my stomach
with chicken broth, hot distilled water, my Earl Gray
spiked with a drop or two of
his precious Johnny Black.
I was better imagining my hair was
sweat-drenched with fever—
somehow my sleep laden days
raw screaming throat
and sodden insomniac's sheets
were less acceptable,
would be less inhibiting than a stomach flu
or the entire Epstein's bar.

Three: the day I had to crawl across the brown stinking carpet
and didn't make it to the bathroom but no consequence
no mess because there was
no money and no food and
all that mattered were the pills that were gone,
taken one two three at a time until I could sleep.

I left before I knew
California was always a myth
that was shattered by staying,
for the men who wouldn't wait.
And the men, they didn't stay.
When they were gone so was the memory
of that first sight,
that first California in the daylight.
That bench on the cliff with the flowers by the ocean.
We've all since wanted to wear
someone else's soft skin just to cross the border
one more first time, hammers and crowbars poised
finally ready.
Who will break the soft skin of that little girl
who is buying her own rouges now and
(gracefully turning down doctors' offers
of painkillers after surgery)
considering how many phone calls it might take
how many might she have to make
to see him in white shirt sleeves
on one more perfect west coast day.

The Aftermath of July 8, 2003

by Lindsay Fernung

Seventeen years old, you practiced art
with purple makeup, brown makeup,
painting bruises under your eyes and
I stood beside you waiting my turn.
We were without the luxury of
a heroin addiction or some other excuse
for disenchantment
too beautiful for the lives we led.
Little girls with smooth skin, thin legs,
so we faked it.
To mold our too-white skin like the dimensions of the
inner chambers of our empty stomachs,
the fading pinks of our dying cardiac muscles
we employed eyeshadow
razorblades, clamps and needles.
We sat on a dirty couch with cigarettes and you set fire
to your plastic soda straw—
let it drip onto the back of my hand and I
was calm like it did not hurt,
so hard in eyeliner and boots.
I wear that scar with false pride today
because again I am that girl, at play with
silver rings through my lip and my ears, through my nose.
Listen, this is why:
I fear walking down the street,
that someone might see me and think it has been easy.
I want to scare you, wear your scent like a cloak,
to protect me,
strands of your hair still clinging to the clothes I have not
washed since I touched you last
24 days ago.
Do they know I am the dotted line,
forever the dotted line between your before
and your after?

Sarah from In Their Shoes Series by Desiree Moore
14" x 11" Silver Gelatin Print



Faces by Glenn Guimond

Dawn:

It started as these things often do, with a wink and a smile. She was my sister's friend, always around the house. We spent a lot of time bumping into each other in the kitchen or sitting close enough for our legs to touch while we watched MTV.

We had known each other for years and she could always make me laugh. Telling me dirty jokes in the basement or dancing out on the deck. Her eyes sparkled when she looked at me. I was the only man alive.

This was after Sara and before the rest of my life. I had just mustered out of the Army. Everything was new, anything was possible. But it couldn't last forever. Nothing does.

Sara:

I remember she had formica-flecked eyes. Sitting in the kitchen at 4AM, Maxwell House woke me up. The floor solid and cold on bare feet. I pulled a cigarette out and smoked. I still wasn't sure where I was. She smiled and asked if I needed any milk or sugar for the coffee, I told her that I did and rubbed my face. She was cleaning up what was left of a party. Half-drunk beers with cigarette butts floating, bottles of bourbon and vodka in the sink. She reminded me of someone I read about once but couldn't remember who. Her hair was auburn and looked like silk even at four in the morning. But the way her eyes reflected the floor drew me in.

Dawn:

The coffee needed more cream and sugar. I put the cup down on the formica table and asked my wife to pass some over. I lit a cigarette and pulled the ashtray closer. She wasn't who I thought she was when we were married so long ago. You could tell by the conversation, because the formica wasn't reflected in her eyes.

We were married sometime in February of 1993 because of the baby. A cold month. I should have known then. The whole thing had been like sitting in the backseat of a worn Cadillac, floating more than driving.

Sara:

I remember the park. Everything was green. Fresh. Her eyes caught and reflected the sun. They were golden. Sometimes you forget the feeling of the sun, but not when she looked at me. We were young and didn't care. When we played touch football she took off her shirt, just like the guys. Everyone laughed, I loved her for it. We drank beer and ate sandwiches at a table made smooth by a thousand other couples.

We laid beside each other staring at a sky so blue it fell on us. Picking out clouds, forgetting that anyone else existed.

Dawn:

You forget the sun when the shades are always drawn. It had to be dark before she would take her shirt off and we could only make love at night. When had her eyes lost their sparkle? When had we died?

I guess it started with work and a car. My hands were rough then, and my skin leather brown. I laid brick and built streets. You've probably walked on my work, my dreams buried underfoot with my sweat and blood. I was always late. Working until there was no sun, under lights. Catching a few hours sleep before it all started again. She was never home. Always with her mother. I lost track of who we were, what we were supposed to be. I think she did too.

That's when she said I should sell my car. "You have the work truck, why do you need a car too?" She said to me. I couldn't see her face in bed, my eyes could never adjust to the darkness.

Sara:

I remember falling in love. Butterflies and light steps. Never being tired, 1AM outside, staring at the sky.

"You can't see the stars around here," I said, "just the moon. Even that gets covered up sometimes."

"It's the city," she said.

"What?"

"Ambient light. It's the city."

"The city hides the stars?"

"Yes," she said.

Lying on a blanket in the backyard. July. The air was wet, heavy. Her hair was cool silk in my hands.

Dawn:

Our daughter was one. We played in the yard, she pulled grass and tried to catch tiny frogs. She took slow, deliberate steps, sometimes falling, pretending like she meant to, so she could pull more grass. I laughed and called my wife. She wouldn't come any further than the window or door. Looking at us through a screen, I could see her outline, her features were blurred.

She walked out dressed in shorts and a t-shirt. Pink flip-flops on her feet carrying her acorn-colored purse. You could

hear her walk as deliberately as our daughter. My car had been sold a few days before, she said she was going to her mother's. That's what I saw most of the time now, her back as she walked away. She left without giving our daughter a kiss.

Sara:

I remember leaving. It was like a punch from Jack Johnson. We skied the day before and had a barbeque with my parents. We sat on the porch and looked at the lake. We stayed up until five in the morning, holding each other, whispering. She fell asleep on my chest. We made promises we couldn't keep. Said we loved each other, I wiped tears from her face.

I was going to college, she wasn't. When I drove away she was standing in a white gravel parking lot, the bottom of her shirt twisted in her hands. I'm still not sure when it ended, that night or sometime in the next few months, but it did. We fell apart like people do.

Dawn:

Waiting. It's a time in between. When your normal life has ended and you wonder what happens next. Our life together had become a novel that someone else was reading. They knew how it was going to end but we had no idea.

The snow was blinding. Four to six inches in the last hour and no end in sight. Our daughter was singing with a church group for Christmas, she was two. My friends and family had driven for hours to see her sing. Only my wife's mother had shown up.

The stage was blinding, lights burned from the ceiling and the floor, a tree and a cross behind them. We sat in the dark and waited. They were dressed in red and green and their voices reminded me of the Munchkins or the Smurfs. We couldn't stop

That's what I saw most of the time now, her back as she walked away.

laughing. My wife had had enough. She left.

I took everyone back to my house. We had cake and ice cream for the diva. My family left, they had a short drive. I told my friends to stay; they had hours to go and couldn't see.

She came home at 8PM. Told me to make them leave, that they ruined the show by laughing. I said no, it's too dangerous to drive. She said it was either them or her, she'd leave and never come back. I told her to go. She took our daughter and drove away.

Glenn:

You never expect your lover's face to change. But it does. It can't be helped. I promised Dawn that I would never break her heart, but I did. We both made promises we couldn't keep. In the dark that night after she left, I found out at 3AM that everyone is equal when they're lonely. ■

Ricochet by Beth Zyglowicz
Digital Image



Supermarket Safe Sex by Barbara Bennett

I spot him in the produce department; tall, dark and shopping for vegetables on a Sunday afternoon. The sexy, intellectual type, hands cupping twin heads of Boston Bibb lettuce. My mouth falls open slightly; I'm imagining those hands cupping my... oh God, he catches me staring. His eyes move slyly from my face to the bunch of curvy yellow bananas I'm absentmindedly stroking with one hand. Mischievous tugs at the corners of his mouth; his long fingers compress succulent green and white leaves. A sign declares "Bing cherries! \$4.99 per pound," so I place one red fruit between my lips, twist the stem till it pops off. I smile shamelessly at him. He reaches for a Georgia peach, index finger examining the groove in its fuzzy, soft flesh. I sigh, he grins; we move a step closer, eyes locked in a fruitful gaze. Just as I'm wondering how far things might go, were they allowed to ripen, a harried mom shoves her shopping cart between us. The spell broken, we turn away to scrutinize our respective lists. Maybe I can catch him in the bakery aisle next Sunday.

Dan The Gay Man by Beth Mink

I don't know why they didn't card us in the bar we used to go to in high school. You told me not to run out or scream. Three-foot-tall candelabras lit mirrors reflecting the owner counting the cash receipts. She was gray haired, heavy, dressed in a black shirt, smoked thin cigars and maybe she knew you. You must have been there with older men. I was just a girl, but you wanted me to know. You used the whole word, homosexual: but I liked you anyway. Girls don't always want guys slobbering all over them. You made me a pottery wall hanging and gave me a square sterling bracelet. Over the years I gave those things away, and the memory of you persists because of their absence. We were the trespassers taking off our clothes and swimming in the dark

Death and Rain by Michael Springer

1
Ann Haslette's grave is as thick
as two fingers pressed together
and leans forward like a sinking ship.

her years have been washed away
by rain, her stone peacefully drifting
toward earth, a head reaching for a pillow.

2
a granite girl is guarding
the McGinnis family grave,
her face broken out in a rash of moss.

a bouquet of cloth flowers is tucked
in the crook of her arm, a black ribbon
loops her wrist. the ribbon pulls her

into the present but will wash away
and she will drift back into the past.
her face will always be growing more blurred.

3
as I write this a bee distracts me.
he lands on flowers and reaches into their young blossoms,
scrambles to the next one.

he doesn't know that he's in a graveyard.
this child doesn't understand
what a graveyard's meaning is. I can't tell him

some of us must build the dead
separate cities. I can't tell him
without this, death would be everywhere.



Natural by Design by Robbin Malooley
6" x 6" Raku Ceramic Pieces with Horsehair Application

A Child Unwilling by Gaylie R. Cotton

when I see
you cloaked in death
courting the grave
oldness overtaking
you like a flood
cheeks sagging idle years

And

when I hear
your melodious laughter
give way to guttural moans
recycling in your chest
murmurs rotting your teeth

And

when I understand
your eagerness
to rejoice and dance
with your fathers
to move fly free
to your heavenly home
a building not made
by man's hands

You

dull gray diamond
of a woman
once youthful mouthy rose
of Tin City
Ft Myers Florida
known for your
long limber legs
sequined toe shoes
for your swivel hips
rocking in smoke-filled Juke
Joints

enticed by the rhythm
the sorrows
spilling through the blues

I

grab hold
rest your head on my bosom
and like air
inhale deep
into my lungs
your secrets
your lamentations
your unconfessed sins
infuse my mind
with memories
that would burden your grave

O

I hold on
not yet willing to rub
you from my bones



Sleep Series #6 by Heather Eileen White
12" x 9" Photograph

Superheroes

(after “Yorick” by Tatyana Tolstaya)

by Josh Flynn

On the bedroom floor of my childhood laid a multitude of comic books, bloated letters on colorful covers boldly declaring dangerous adventures and stunning surprises. I would organize the comics—many different systems evolved, piled by title, by month and year, by storyline chronology, and character appearance—but in the end, they were most often found scattered across the wooden floorboards.

It was an endlessly growing collection. Each week, one or two new issues would find their way into the mass of muscled men in garish costumes and busty women so top-heavy there was no conceivable way their superpowers could keep them floating through the skies.

With the door closed, I would sink down into my deflated mattress. My back was pierced by the tiny tips of strong springs reaching out from a shallow swamp of stuffing holding me up, while a comic was suspended over my face. Three-color superheroes saving the world on newsprint. The comics were a force field, blocking the tension building in the living room—the words my parents hurled at each other. I was saving the world with the X-Men, or swinging from New York skyscrapers alongside Spiderman. Every evening from four to eight, I slipped into those imaginary lives while my father sat at the kitchen table, slowly drifting off into an alcoholic stupor. Only after he collapsed on the couch, sound asleep, would I put the comics down and venture from my room. I would sit in front of the television with my brother, laughing when desperate words fled my father’s mouth.

We were audience to an intoxicated conversation born from a nightmare. He tossed and turned and shouted. I thought of the superheroes, their sleep haunted by the past—by what made them who they were.

*

There were a few oddities in my collection, the ancient *Archies*, handed down from relatives, Bugs Bunny, Mickey Mouse, and *Star Wars* with a purple Yoda (before anyone knew what he looked like). They would get lost on the floor, sinking under the weight of the Incredible Hulk, unable to live up to the soap opera sagas the Marvel heroes promised. Would Spiderman defeat Dr. Doom, deliver the medicine Aunt May needs, and get Mary Jane to forgive him? Would the mutant X-Men save the prejudiced senator from assassination, even though he was promoting a legislation of hate to outlaw their kind?

I would read the crinkled pages over and over, eventually folding the covers back, studying carefully each twist of a line, each sharp angle on the splash page. A sketchbook was always on the floor by my bed. I would imitate the works of art each issue brought, with no thought to the words. The words trapped in boxes, the words hovering in balloons.

*

“Damn it!” “Fuck!” The shouted words would make quick jabs at my carefully crafted world of make believe. Unpredictable, it would hit with sudden fury, like Wolverine’s berserker rage when pushed too far. His metal claws would tear through the flesh on the

back of his hand, and he would keep fighting until no one was left standing. I could hear the skillet clang against the living room wall, sailing from my father's hand. But I had the superheroes to worry about, their fighting exclaimed with a bold "POW!" or "KA-BOOM!" I had to worry about Cyclops, the steel car hurtling across the street at him, launched with ease from the hands of the Juggernaut.

*

When I was fourteen, my mother took a job at Burger King, and while taking orders behind the counter, she met a married landscape contractor. She would disappear after dinner, choosing a supper out alone and leaving us with the meatloaf or leftover pizza. Visits to Wal-Mart would find her browsing cassette singles for the latest love songs by Wilson Phillips or Taylor Dayne. I never heard her listen to them, never saw them after she fished them from the shopping bag and deposited them into her purse. One night, turning her blue Grand-Am left off of Washington Street onto Markland Avenue, she asked me, "What would you say if I told you I was having an affair?"

She came home one evening to find the shotgun sitting on the table. Rousing my brother and me from our room, she made us pack school clothes for the next day. I shoved comics into my bulging blue bag—already stuffed full of school books I never opened, homework I never did. As my dad stood by the table, stood by the shotgun, he said, "They don't have to leave, only you." She went first to her sister, crying and asking for money, then she took us to a sketchy motel on the outskirts of Kokomo. My mom and brother laid in the beds, watching cable television—*Back to the Future*. I chose the floor, the carpet scratchy under my body, my comics stacked by my pillow.

*

I'm really thinking of the superheroes: chosen through unfortunate circumstances, bitten by radioactive spiders, born with genetic mutations, or produced by government research. Ripped from their lives and families, or never knowing normality

to begin with. They went off and saved lives, fought evil, and always won, no matter the enormity of the crisis. In a few months it would all be over. They would be victorious and ready for the next catastrophe to arrive. But maybe I'm really thinking about the innocence of it all. On those nights when my force field failed ruptured by the words ripping through my imaginary world—when I was left holding tightly to the remaining shreds with all my effort suspended high above the ground, feet dangling—I was waiting for the superheroes to come. ■



Bunny Mask by Louis Wheeler Every II
11" x 8.5" Pen on Paper

Miss Julia Ann by Gaylie R. Cotton

Miss Julia Ann spoke in tongues
was Holy-Ghost-filled
and water-baptized

But Sugar Man regarded
the strength of no man
nor the omnipotence
of any God

This bowed legs
russet-brown-skinned believer
whose coarse nappy hair
refused to be subdued
into smooth straight lines
bared her cross
just as Paul his affliction
his thorn in the flesh

Carried her bruises
her scars her burdens
as proud and pleased
as the leather-bound holiness
she toted underneath her arm
every Wednesday Friday
and Sunday noonin'

Induced by whiskey wine or temper
Sugar Man layed hands
to buffet his woman his wife

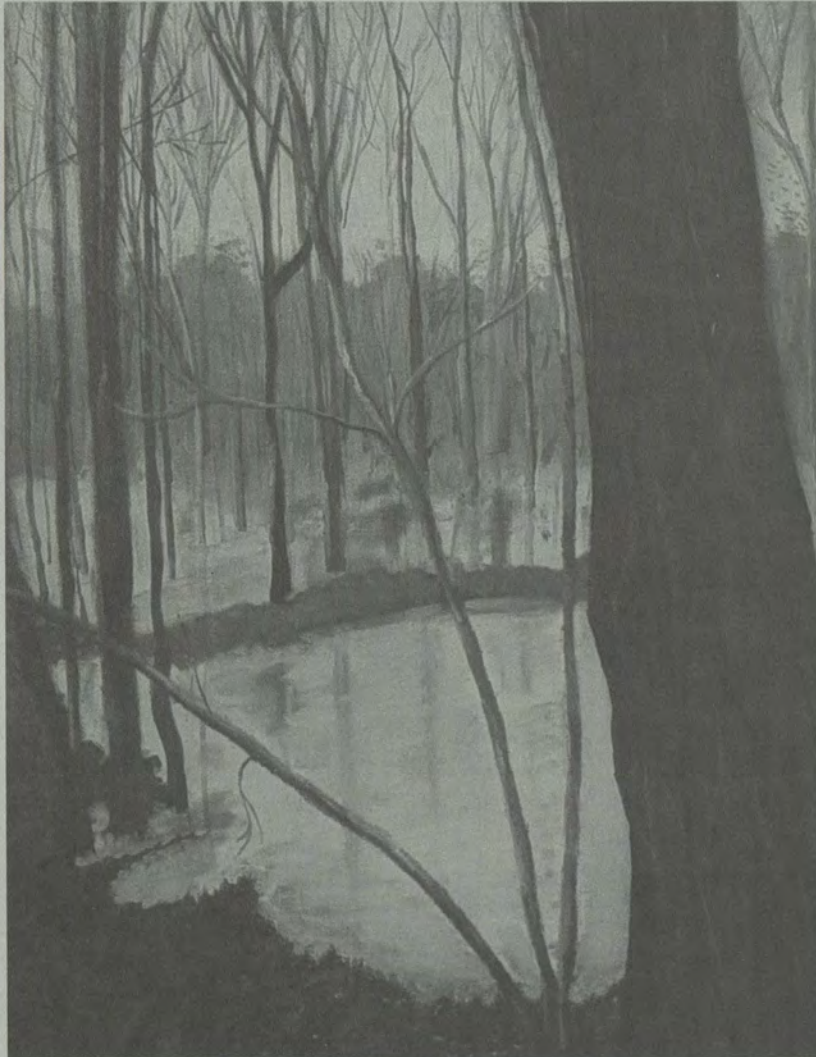
She fought neither words nor swings
but heeded the counsel
of blue-haired church mothers
to stand still
for the battle was not hers
let the Holy Ghost
war in her stead

Prepped in prayer
feelin' a shout comin' on
gettin' full of the Spirit
she'd rattle off in her heavenly language
the entrance of her words ringing
out loud as a two-edged sword
sheathing from its hold

Sugar Man regarded the strength of no man
but was dumbfounded by prayers
rolling off her tongue

He'd settle into the comfort
of his '78 Buick
ride off convicted
cut deep by words unknown

She'd revel in survival
of broken bones blistered lips death
raise her hands thank the Lord
and do her sanctified dance



Winter in Findlay by Regina J. Devassy
18" x 14" Oil on Canvas



Aubade by Terri N. Graves

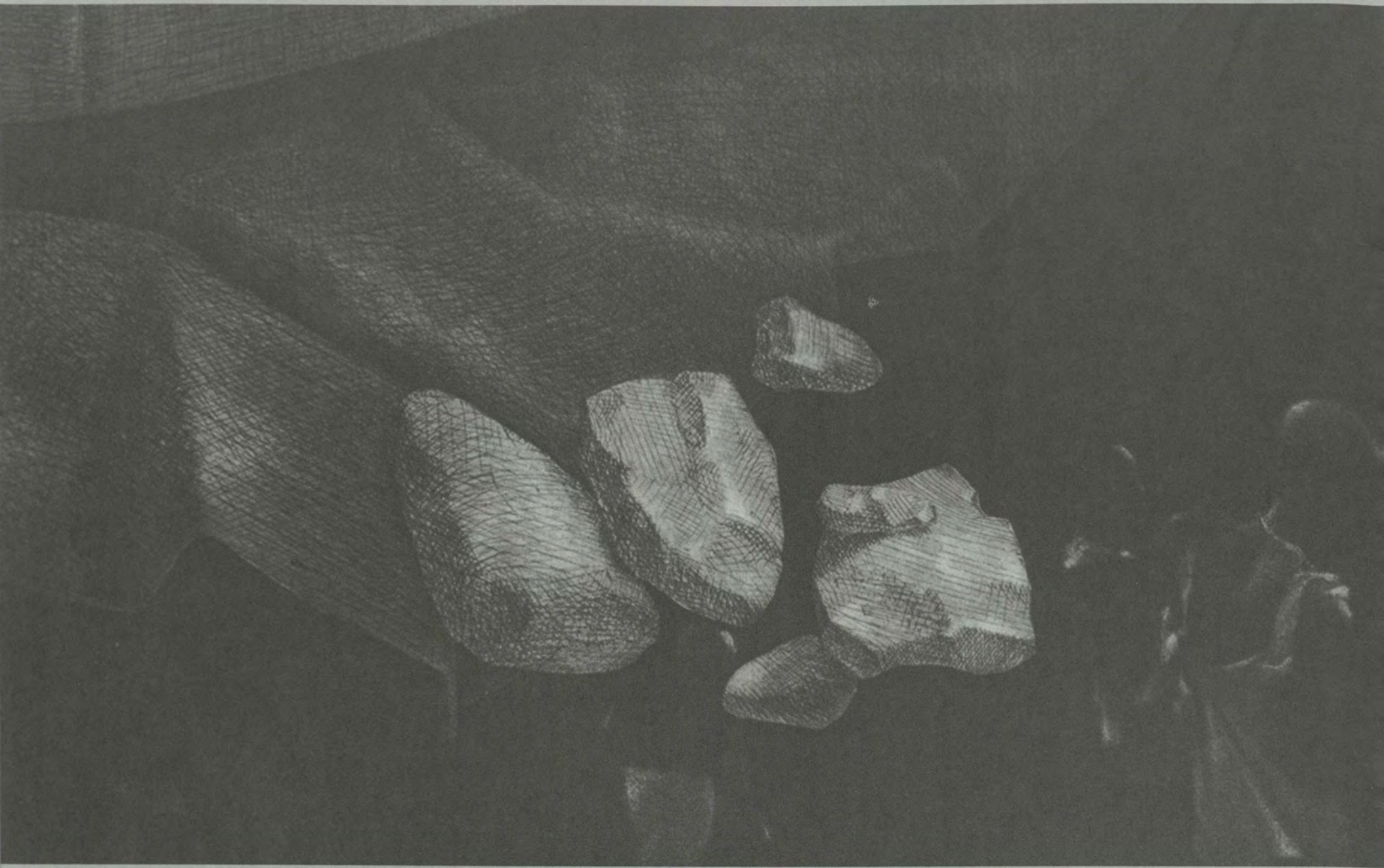
Red hibiscus petals unfurl with encroaching
light as a cardinal's notes tickle her ears.
"Not yet," she whispers.

Morning grows loud with light
and each passing car is like the tick
of a clock, tells the time.

Rushing water resounds within the room,
changing from grays to yellows,
light awakening colors.

White rays of the sun rush in, strike his face.
He sighs, turns over just in time to see
her long slender leg escape
the closing door.

Refuge by Ken Nureberg
12" x 7" Etching



Fertile Ground by Ken Nureberg
9.5" x 12" Etching

Self-Portrait
by Terri N. Graves

You stand there in the garden your toes sunk
in mud, red glitter in your hair.

I love that.

Remember the nineteen-inch waist your sisters envied?
Thirty-plus years later, it's been replaced by marshmallow.

I hate that.

You're strong and fashion new gardens in which nature delights.
A hummingbird moth dives into the harbor of the angel trumpet.

I love that.

That yellow shirt again, I wish you could find your beauty.
I knew you when you were hopeful, ripe, and never lonely.

I'm sorry.

You'd walk to the store, to the park, for the hell of it.
Everyone was greeted along the way with a smile or wave.

I need that.

Your home is green with the aroma of cookies.
December plays there much too often.

Damnit, I miss the sparkle.

Early Warning by Mick Powers

Shelby Jones, in an old pair of jeans, was standing at the meat counter of a local supermarket. Her boyfriend, Will Shackelford, was working—he was “swamped,” as he often liked to say. The customers didn’t stand in one line, she noticed. Instead, they seemed to guard the cut of meat they wanted, so, she imagined, Will had no one plan of attack. She was standing at the end of the seafood counter near a swinging, silver metal door to the department. Leaning on the mirrored surface, she watched as her nostrils flared and fogged the shiny metal of the counter.

She looked along the counter at a man not much older than her boyfriend. He had wanted a special T-bone at the perfect thickness. So Will was busy at the saw. She thought of the animal, the cow as it had been slaughtered, cut, butchered, and shaped. And standing off behind the other customers was a pregnant woman, her long black sweater opened, unbuttoned, revealing a swollen, grotesque stomach. Shelby was suddenly aware of the seafood, a shock of fish-smell, and growing slowly more nauseated, she left the counter without Will noticing.

A few hours later, in the bathroom, she was leaning back against the shower tub, and was looking at the toilet, ready to be sick. But she wasn’t throwing up, and hadn’t since late afternoon. It was the idea of being near the toilet that comforted her; if she needed to be sick it was there in front of her. She had left work early, left cutting hair. The salon was in the mall so she stopped by the drugstore for a pregnancy kit. The whole thing had upset her. Since she was fourteen she had been using condoms. She had always feared disease more than pregnancy. But now the thought was unbearable.

And she couldn’t, for the life of her, remember a night when she had actually let Will forget a condom—he often tried

to accidentally forget to reach for a condom. And leaning against the pink fiberglass tub, she suddenly remembered how he always acted around babies, as if he was showing off how good he would one day be with kids of his own. She knew it was an act, knew he really had no clue.

Everything about him annoyed her.

The thought of cutting hair seemed to settle her nerves, but the chemicals came back to her, so she crawled to the toilet thinking it was time. But she wasn’t sick. And again she thought of work. She could not escape babies. Conversations about babies, pictures of babies, and she could only nod and smile politely. The older clientele seemed to know, so it was on her conscience all morning, and they all seemed to choose this day for showing pictures of grandbabies, women not much older than her mom holding baby pictures, perm solution coming off each word and Shelby saw herself in the mirror and her smock would flare out from her body. She’d not been sick in front of customers, but two hours into her shift she had to leave: when the mall seemed to get busy with screaming kids and babies. And after most of the afternoon near the toilet, she thought she’d stop in to see Will, to tell him the stick was positive. She couldn’t believe she still felt she loved him, that she still needed him. But she was feeling sicker, after knowing for sure. She leaned over the bowl.

For whatever reason, she suddenly remembered a girl she works with at the hair salon; nearly the same age, they never really had much to say to each other. Today, her looks had been strange. Shelby knew she was a bitch. She’d never really trusted her. Just out of earshot, Shelby imagined today she had been directing words at her: she swore she had mentioned murder. Or maybe it was the girl she had been treating. Someone had said something about murder. Something about

all of God's persons.

She didn't want a baby. She had never wanted babies. She had always been sure to prevent them. She could remember the first time she and Will had talked about it. Just after moving in together, they had been out half the night at bars with friends. When they had gotten back to their bedroom, they had been in a mood for one of those talks. And she could never stop thinking about her family growing up, how her dad would hit her mom, and how drunk he would get and look at her like an animal. But Will hadn't done anything like that.

They agreed the fallout would be abortion. If, for whatever reason, contraceptives didn't work. They were too young. She was too young. It was just that simple. But now, the more she thought, the more she wondered about murder. She would soon have to actually go through with the abortion. She knew she could—no matter what others really thought. She would not have a baby. She wasn't easing her mind. She heaved deep and tears formed in her eyes. A moment went by and she looked into the bowl and at the toilet seat. She noticed it needed cleaning.

She was shaking a little. She ignored the phone when it rang. A few hours passed, it rang again. And she was on the bathroom floor. The worn carpet smelled of dust. She remembered the water heater had fallen, through the rotted trailer floor early in the day. She needed to tell Will. And he came home. She could feel his footfalls all the way through the living room.

He was in the kitchen. He had brought home groceries for dinner, and she could hear the plastic and paper bags as he maneuvered them onto the counter. He called out for her. She said nothing. She



Nandi—the Divine Bull by Regina J. Devassy
30" x 30" Acrylic on Canvas

heard him get into the fridge for a beer, and he popped it. Everything about him seemed to say he was excited.

She sat up and leaned against the tub and realized she hadn't had a cigarette all day. She pulled her hair band down around her neck and then up past her forehead.

"Anyone home?" he asked.

He stepped into the bathroom in his uniform and Black Angus hat. She smelled the meat on him, and the cuffs of his long-underwear shirt had been dabbed in blood, deep red stains near the cuffs; she imagined he did work hard.

She gagged. "Get out." And she gagged again. "You stink. Get out."

"What?—still sick?" He stood over her as she tried to get up. "Well, I brought food home," she left the bathroom. "Maybe after a bit, huh, if you're feeling better?"

She heard him moving around in the bathroom. She stood at her side of the bed. She'd mentioned to Will the night before she thought she was pregnant. She had expected a sullen moment, and then they would plan to get an abortion. It was, after all, supposed to be that simple. They had been watching late-night reruns in the living room. This was usually her time; he was usually ready for bed. She had the volume low, the remote was left on the floor, and she had told him. She was pregnant. She had been sort of slouched in the corner of the sofa, looking at him, her toes under his butt.

"You're sure? You're pregnant?" He was almost excited.

"Not exactly, but, yeah, Will, I think so." She paused. "I'll get a test tomorrow."

He just sort of stared off with a weird smile. When he spoke, he no longer sounded like himself. "Here, come here..."

He'd betrayed her, holding back what he'd been thinking and planning. She blamed him.

"What?" she asked, trying to push him away.

"I want to hold you."

"You what?" She pushed him back. "You want to hold me?"

"Well, yeah, I mean, this is a good thing, right?"

"A good thing?" She suddenly became

contaminated by the thought: "A good thing?" She couldn't find any more words.

"Yeah, don't you think we're ready for a baby?" He asked.

"No." She answered immediately. She wasn't sure she remembered her reasoning, but she knew her answer was no. It was late and she was forced into an argument.

"You know we're not having kids, right?" She looked at him, a little disgusted.

"Well, why not, Jesus, God, Shelby!" He got up and slowly moved around the room in the television light. He acted as if he'd prepared for the argument. As if everything was falling into place. She was no longer sure if it was the idea of having babies or the idea of having his baby that suddenly made her feel weak and disgusted. She thought she could hate him for wanting her to keep it.

"I love you, Shelby."

She simply looked up at him. "This is not what we decided," she got up, trying to ignore him, and walked to the kitchen and flipped on a light. "You said... we agreed we wouldn't."

"That was two years ago."

She lit a cigarette. "So what." She sat at the kitchen table and maneuvered an ashtray. When she started thinking of her doctor, of making the plans for the abortion, she became lightheaded. "It doesn't make any difference when we decided, we said no kids, that's what we decided."

He smiled at her. He was really trying to convince her it was right. His eyes sort of shone, wide, with what could only be happiness, his happiness. She believed he really wanted a baby.

"Why have you changed your mind all of a sudden?" She was

annoyed. But not angry. He'd betrayed her, holding back what he'd been thinking and planning. She blamed him. Tried to remember the night she might've gotten pregnant. Impossible: she couldn't think when it had happened. She was beginning to feel anxious.

"I think we're ready." He spoke as if they were buying a house or a car. "I got it all planned out," he smiled. "Look," he continued, putting hands on the glass table, "I should be in the union by December."

She didn't believe him. That he actually knew what was going on.

She smoked and trembled—her bad nerves.

"I'm department manager by January, full benefits by spring, Jesus, Shelby." It was as if a light had turned on, and she could no longer have an argument. And she imagined she might have to quit her job—was he implying she wouldn't have to work?

"No," she said. And stood up. "No way, Will." She put out her cigarette.

She would not cry. And she knew he wanted her to. "I don't care, Will, even if we had the money, which we don't, but even if we did, we're not ready for this." The way she paused was like a dream, a vision of restful places. "We're not having it."

They stood, not speaking. He wanted to speak, she could tell. And something fell over him, as if he had been waiting for an opening. They stared at each other for a moment. She could tell, she knew him, he was angry. She looked to the living room, to the television, just avoidance.

"You think it's that simple?" His eyes, now without glimmer, had turned on her. And as he took one step to her, it was no longer a simple misunderstanding.

"Yeah, yeah, I do." And she was no longer scared of the abortion; it dawned on her that Will might not let her. But she kept looking at him.

"It is just that simple," she added.

"I don't think you really believe that." After a moment, he moved off to the fridge and opened a beer. And she wondered if she

really needed his help.

"Well, I'm getting it." She almost didn't say anything more, but she was suddenly aware of herself, aware of her certainty. "We're not having a baby."

He had ended up leaving, had gone out till late. They had left it at that. And she had not spoken with him until he had appeared in the bathroom.

She slid into her waterbed. She really had nothing more to say. But, realistically, she knew it wouldn't be that simple. She figured she was sick more from nerves than from the pregnancy. She could not sleep. And she was pregnant. She hadn't felt all that bad until after she took the test. She'd only been nervous. And as she tried to get cozy, Will stood changing into clean pants. She felt like she saw the end of it. The idea of getting an abortion was nice. And she closed her eyes to the thought. It would be scary but not nearly as scary as having a baby. She would get back to her life. She could be normal again. She wondered if she still loved Will.

"The water heater fell through the floor." She spoke very slowly.

"What?" he asked, turning to her quickly.

She repeated herself.

"Okay." But he wasn't concerned with it anymore. "I got some french-style green beans," he was slipping into a clean undershirt.

"Which I heard was your favorite," he continued, almost playful, "and New York strip, and mashed potatoes with chives."

She felt like an animal. When he spoke, she was no longer his girlfriend. She was merely something having a baby. His baby. Stock. Black Angus.

"You get some rest, and I'll fix your favorites." He slid into bed with her. He still smelled of meat. Her back was to him and he spooned her, trying to feel her belly. She suddenly felt a sharp pain and cramp.

"What're you doing?" She wanted him off her.

"Shelby, for God's sake, just relax." He drove her out of the bed.

"I won't relax." She couldn't escape him. She wanted to relax, but it was the fact he wanted her to that infuriated her. She was angry;

she wanted it all done with. She couldn't stop thinking of the procedure, the doctor, the cold things, everything lifeless. And after feeling his touch, still on her as she stood over him, over the bed, she wanted to murder. Let them all have at it with her. She would kill it.

"I know you won't, but I'm thinking you should," he said, getting up from the bed.

She didn't move; she just watched him walk to the kitchen. It wouldn't be over until they decided. For sure. She had to make it clear to him now she would not have it. She just stood there in her pajamas, worn out, disgusted. And she wondered about brutality. She could be. Brutal, if she needed to be. And she would. The thought appealed to her, of striding into the kitchen and getting the doctor's number. She knew what he wanted. A clear and easy fight.

She heard the television come on. The World Series. He'd been watching it on and off all week. And she grabbed a bag from behind her vanity. It became clear she had a baby inside, and it was growing, it would grow and keep growing. She didn't know what to do, what to take, what to leave. She wanted to be sick.

"Come on, goddamnit." She heard him pop a fresh beer.

She finished packing, anything at first, and she focused on an outfit for work. She wasn't going to miss another day. When she walked into the kitchen, he had his back to her and as he put the steaks to the pan, she saw them sizzle and smoke. He was reaching for a spoon on the counter and caught sight of her.

"What, you're leaving?" He asked, turning to her with a little laugh.

She didn't say anything. She stood, her winter coat open, in her cotton pajamas, a bag on her shoulder.

"You're not leaving, Shelby." He had a strange smile.

"I am, Will." She tried to move toward the living room.

"No, Shelby, no goddamnit." He took a few steps toward her. She stopped and looked at him. She could smell the food on the stove. They could only look at each other. The commentator was excited

This was the man,
this was the father:
she laughed out
loud.

about a homerun. Shelby couldn't believe her life was suddenly defined by a baseball game. And she was hot in her coat.

"You don't want to do this, Shelby." His pleading voice. Somehow, as if by bluffing, he seemed more like himself, like he had just been fucking with her all along, as if everything had just been a misunderstanding, and it was like she wasn't pregnant.

"Look, I know you're scared," he continued.

She could smell the beer on him. She could imagine the abortion. She hated his voice, his reason, his tone. And she suddenly hated unwanted, living things.

And he continued: "I'm scared, too. You know. But we can do this, and we will do this, I know we can." And now she saw him for real. What he was trying to do.

Like he'd wanted to transform himself into some new figure in her life. Like he was her great provider. And she hated him. He wanted the baby. He wanted his baby. But he wasn't who he had been. He was changed. He'd broken the deal, the promise. Will turned and stepped back to the stove, it was all he needed to say, and flipped the steaks. She watched him. She remembered her father. He'd just threatened her, dared her to make a move. She thought for a moment over what was taking place. And she knew what he was doing: he was in the middle of some sort of display, some gesture to prove himself. This was the man, this was the father: she laughed out loud.

She was walking toward the door, a little unsure of herself. But she made her move, taking determined, unmistakable strides. She stopped at his voice, when he called to her from the kitchen, appearing beneath the cabinets, utensils, implements in hand.

"Shelby." She tried to ignore him. "You can't just leave, goddamnit."

She stood, waited to see what he'd do, and wondered what would keep her from leaving—just in case he might say something to keep her from hating him.

"Shelby," he moved fast to the living room, ready to punish. "You're being stupid." He couldn't hide his anger. He steadied

himself on the back of their old brown couch. "You're not leaving," he worked at calming himself, "I don't have any idea what you're trying to prove."

"Will," she just smiled, shaking her head a little, and decided on saying nothing. And she turned to the door and left. The Red Sox had just won the Series. She couldn't believe her life.

Outside it had grown cold. The front steps were metal, unstable and wobbly. She started for her car, but something stopped her. She was still for a moment, crossing her arms, alone, and she loved the open air around her. She looked around. The grass needed mowed. And the air was crisp and fresh. The neighbors were being quiet. She felt something. She knew it wasn't moving, but she felt something. A twitch of a nerve. The expanding void inside her. She thought of it growing: a baby, a boy, no doubt. A man. A man who could be anything or everything or nothing at all and she remembered stillbirths. She imagined the possibility of a full term pregnancy; the grotesque swelling void would always just be a void. It was devouring her. It wasn't Will who was keeping her from having the baby. It wasn't her father. She did not *need* babies.

She heard the door open quickly behind her and she immediately stepped to the passenger side of her car and threw her bags inside. As she turned, Will was on the steps.

"So, where you gonna go?"

She was at the driver's side, he was watching her, Will, with no shoes or socks and nothing but pants and white undershirt, beer in hand, and a voice that tried to make her do something. He stood as if a beacon, one she would never ever have to fly to.

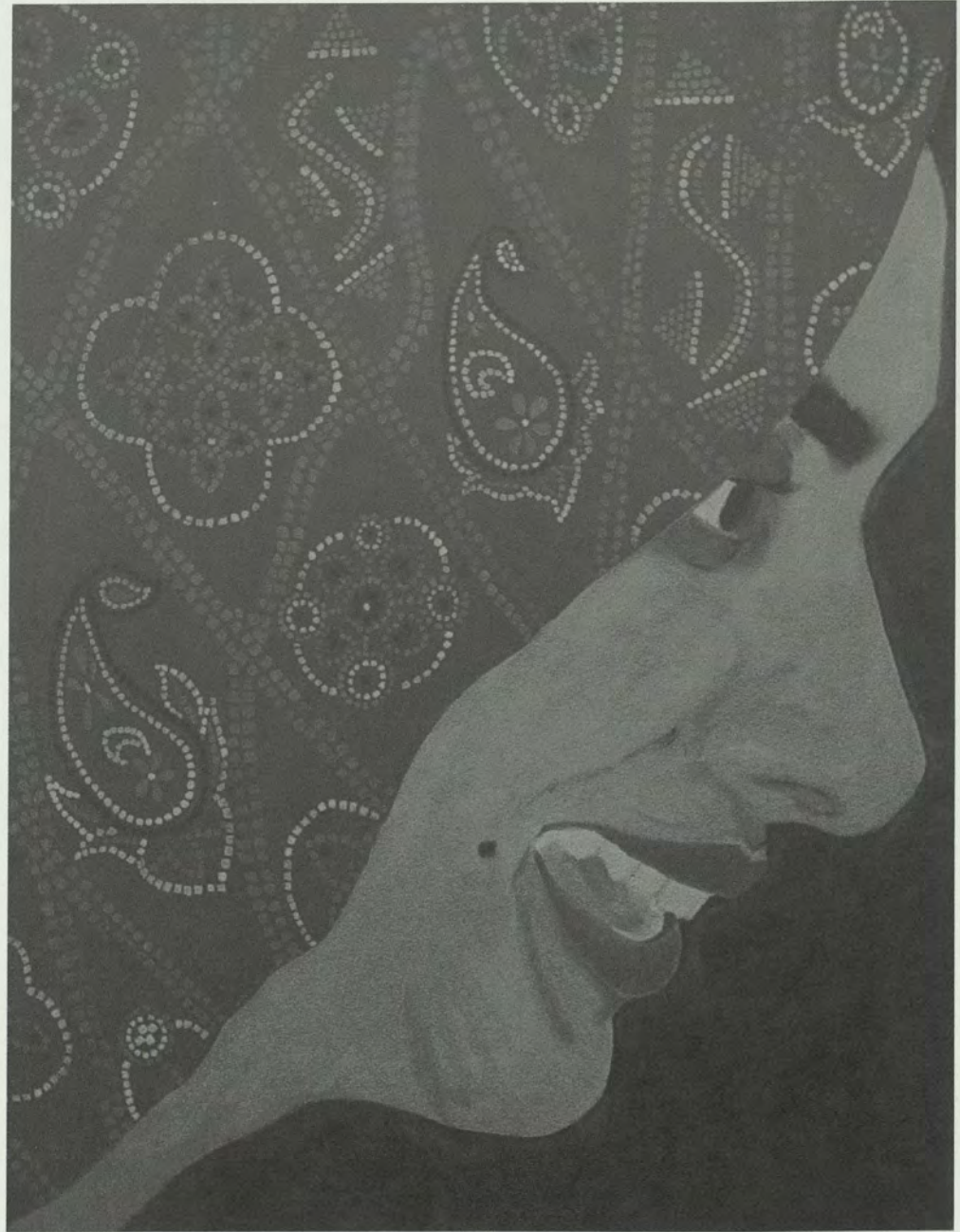
"Well?" He asked. His face was shaded from the light. She didn't need to make out how he was feeling. "You know," he paused, "you leave, you do that, but you better just keep going. Keep running, Shelby, you just keep running." He laughed a little.

She knew this man. Knew him. "I'm not having your baby." It was in her voice. But she wasn't sure if he believed what she said. He said nothing, but she knew he expected her to return to the

trailer. Instead, she got in her car, and she saw him, and she could hear the door slamming over her engine.

She backed her little car out of her parking place, and pulled her seatbelt on. And didn't think of him again. At the entrance of the trailer park, she was really sick. She grabbed a leftover Biggie cup near the emergency break. And as she flipped open the plastic top, a car pulled in, lights came over her, she was sick, like yellow syrup, from deep down inside. But she was relieved. She was really relieved.

After the car passed, everything was quiet. She sat in her car for some time at the entrance. And it seemed too dark. The lights at the entrance were out, she noticed, but that wasn't it. And she looked out over the dark, empty field that kept going out beyond her headlights, and the space that opened up and up and kept opening and going on and on beyond the headlights. As she turned onto the country road, driving away from the trailer park, she let out a laugh, an awkward laugh that turned into a subtle choke and moan and she wept. And laughed. She couldn't stop. She didn't know where she was going, for the roads she had driven all her life now seemed unfamiliar. ■



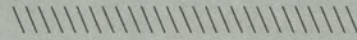
Self-Portrait—from East to West
by Regina J. Devassy
18" x 11" Oil on Canvas

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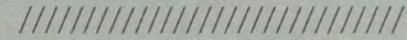
Picture me in a black suit, a big hat, probably plaid socks, or at least ones with little diamonds on them. I'm at a window seat, counting cows, or whatever I spent my childhood doing,



when I notice her sitting across from me

eyes shining like wet marbles

Hollywood lips.



hair as rich and bright as a burning cake

a small, slightly pinched nose

And a chin.

2

the first time you fall

it feels the same

for everyone,

it's Audrey Hepburn,

Marilyn Monroe,

magic & dancing

but a few years later,

Catherine Zeta-Jones is walking out on Tom Hanks.

A few years later, the end to *Breakfast at Tiffany's* looks like a deus ex machina.

3

One last comment before we can get started.

It is taken for granted:

- A. True love is synonymous with immortal love.
- B. There is no immortality for individual consciousnesses.
- C. When one dies, one no longer has thoughts or emotions.
- D. When one no longer has thoughts or emotions, they no longer love.
- E. Therefore, there's no such thing as true love.

For further information, talk to people in bars.

4

your voice is a soft stream;
it washes away broken
dreams and buries them in
deep sands, makes pearls
from their bones. its quiet
current carries the sound
of the ocean. i mean, in time,
i think your mouth could
unlock god, could uncover
new islands.

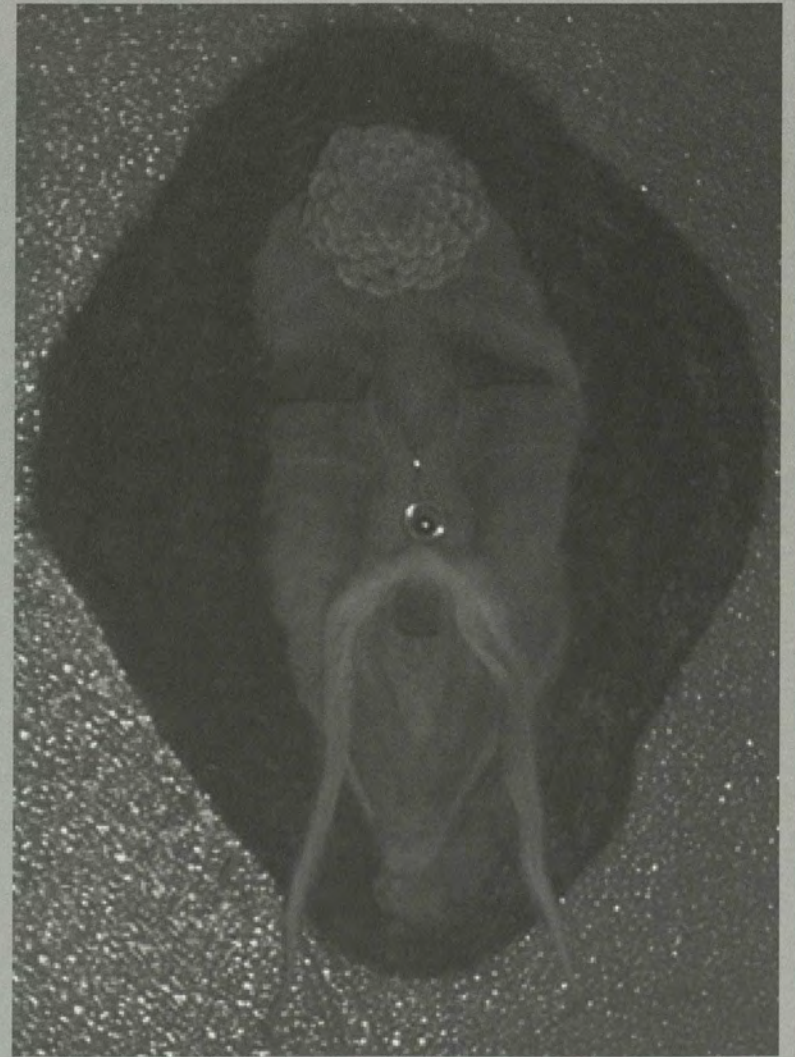
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I don't know what it meant to you when we decided to build the fort,
when we lined cushions around the sides of the table, when the bedsheet door
hung down, and marked off our private darkness. I don't know what it meant to you,
But I hope you

noted

the following:

1. moving in pitch black
we feel what is right ahead
just what we can touch
2. the fan blows cool air
breathing bodies press closer
shifting, inhaling
3. there is no journey
time is impossible when
in love in a fort



Oldone Mask by David Goodknight
8" Earthenware, Mixed Media

Saturday, December 13th 2003 by Megan Wells

Muddied fog hung heavy on the winter night. I glanced out the window and watched my breath form a soft exhaled circle on the glass.

"I need coffee." My words bumped around the car until finding young William's ears, but they did not penetrate any further than that.

"Right, me too." His clothes, worn woolen shirts and miner's pants—the clothes of tired working men—always made him look stronger than he was. He was tired for a lad who oughtn't know of life's misfortunes. Walking was a chore, as was speaking and eating—his limbs lay so lightly upon everything he touched. It was a wonder he could drive a car.

Friday nights are thought to be playgrounds for mischief. Young ones attack downtown streets with a fervor and exaggerate every lit match as if to light the entire town with their rebellion. Tonight, I bid young William "come along, smoke with me in the part of town where the rain doesn't settle but runs along sidewalks and streets like oil over water." We left the car sitting in the lot as our bookmark and set to sidewalks with everything and nothing to find.

I had often thought young William to be a worthy boy. Granted, he never shouted or got excited and his lack of emotion worried me a bit. The few times he spoke enough words to fill a sentence he seemed to open his eyes wide enough for me to reach all the way in and pull out handfuls of thoughts as if cleaning seeds from a pumpkin.

"Have you got a cigarette to spare? I must have forgotten my own."

"Of course. Hold my hand, I'm absolutely frozen solid." He struck a match, lit both our cigarettes like mighty torches in the dark, and took my hand in his own. Tired, frail, and forgetful.

Because evenings of this lazy nature had become commonplace for young William and I, the thought had crossed my mind more than once to speak of marriage and babies, dinner dishes, and linens—all the solid things that we were to come into together through no fault of our own.

"Do you want a wife, William? Or do you plan to be a bachelor forever?"

"Hadn't thought of it, I suppose. Does seem a long time off, doesn't it? Settling down and being an adult?" Arching his eyebrows to question me was a task so great upon his face that he had to break it and return to his natural state, staring straight ahead as steadfast as a locomotive but with far less intensity.

"A long way off perhaps, but nice to consider. Someone to share a bed with and someone to help you beat the dust out of rugs. I think you'd be a fine husband, William."

"And you a fine wife... but you must remember to always be patient."

"Oh, not a problem. Not a problem at all."

I snuffed out my light under the toe of my shoe as we approached the café. He held the door high enough for me to walk

underneath him and I felt as though I were playing a child's game. I could smell his coat: peppermint, tobacco, and laundry soap.

Unpolished jazz crept around the room as we took our seats at a solid oak table far from any other patrons. Young William stretched his long thin arms up and yawned like a cat in preparation for getting our drinks. We came for cups of coffee but only used them for drowning little silences or for dipping fingers in.

"Thank you," I said.

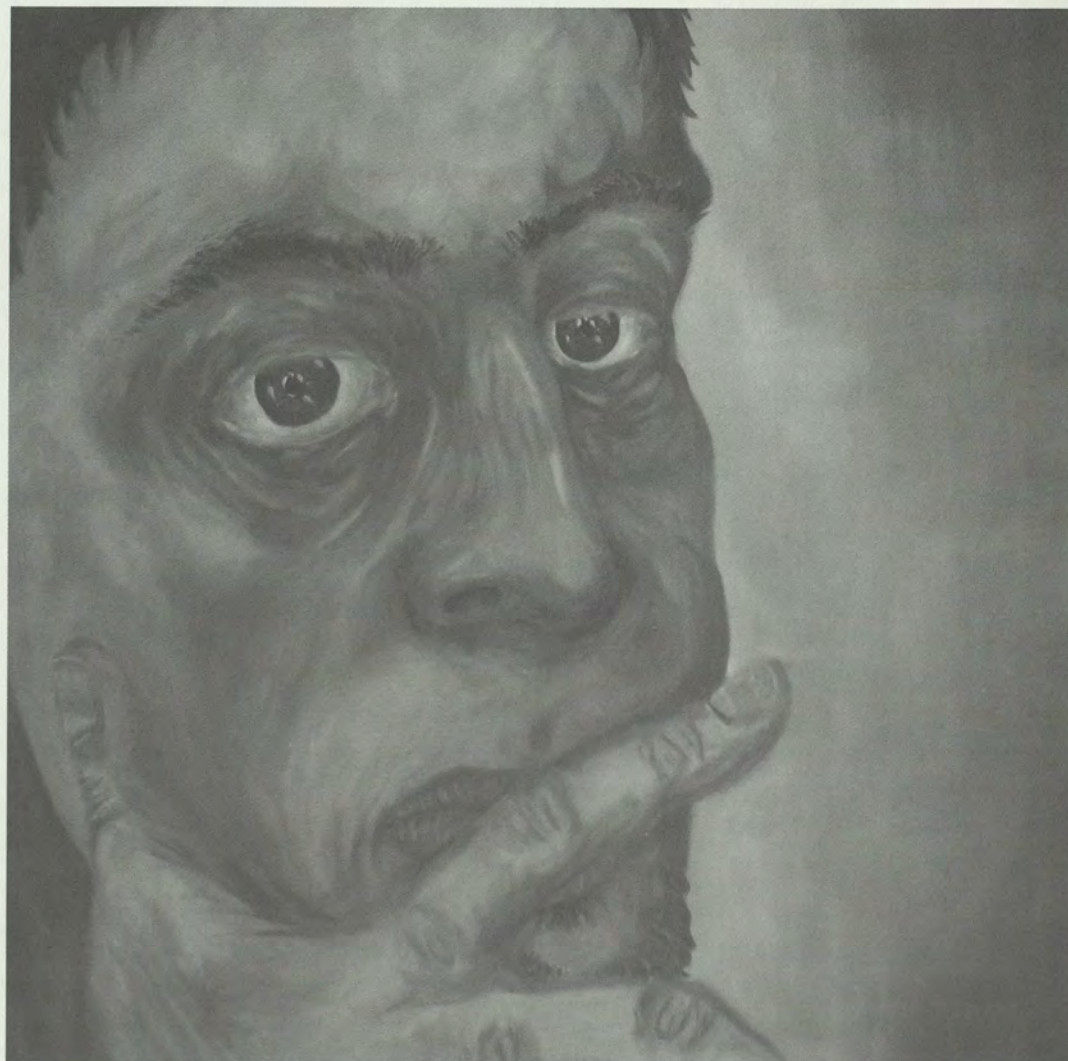
"Of course." He then paused the most dramatic pause in all of history or literature, fiction or otherwise. "You're only eighteen, you know."

"What?"

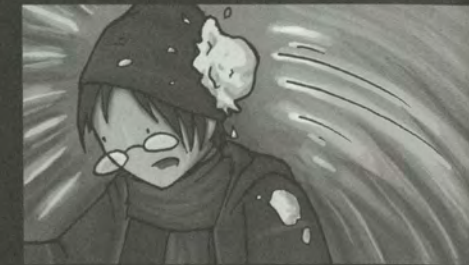
"Marriage... you don't want it yet. We're fine the way we are." His face became not a face at all, not flesh and bone but petrified pale rock. The recognition of the word 'we' was clear on both our accounts but I smiled the smile a girl smiles when she is so fond of someone she can hardly sit still in her chair.

"You're absolutely right. We are."

Back on the street, journeying due north and nearly back to where we started, we lit each other's cigarettes. I intently watched his face for any other sign as he watched smoke curl up in perfect rings past light posts and up to heaven. ■



Looking by Joe Bieschke
40" x 40" Oil on Canvas



The Basement by David Dean Elery

I hear their voices
from the other room;
not really yelling, yet adamant.
My wife raising objections to my son,
my son counters with logical solutions.
I walk to the door to let them know I am home.

My son excitedly turns wide-eyed to me and implores,
"Dad, *please* tell mom that I can move into the basement."
My wife turns to me with a look of penetrating inquisition.
I look deep into the dark hollows of my son's pleading eyes.

In his eyes I see a room from long ago, with macramé candle holders and black light posters; a table, a bed, a dilapidated sofa where I once wrestled girls for the virtue they were eager to part with, and I was tacitly terrified to accept. Where my friends and I would smoke pot out of contraptions constructed of common household items. Where I would run to write poems of unspoken desire that were never read by anyone, where I could dream, and think and hope and listen to music that spoke to me but was totally incomprehensible to my parents.

I looked my son in the eye and said,
"Of course you can move into the basement." My wife's demeanor indicates that I may be sharing the basement with my son.
And for a moment, I am
the second happiest
boy in the
world.

Wandering Death Valley By Philip McNealy

I am standing on a remote washboard road in Eureka Valley, in northern Death Valley National Park. Four hours of white-knuckle driving on this road (against the advice of the ranger at the last outpost), dodging rocks, carefully negotiating washouts, and swerving around “Road Closed” signs have brought me seventy miles to this place. Miraculously, I’m here without a gash in my car’s oil pan or any of my teeth rattled loose.

To the south I can see the graceful, ghostly shapes of the dunes at the end of this valley. To the north is a seemingly endless expanse of desert, hemmed in on both sides by dry, craggy peaks. Immediately behind me, to the east, is a massive alluvial fan that spills out of the Last Chance Range—waterless, rugged desert mountains. In front of me, to the west, is my objective: Marble Canyon dunes. They are barely visible through a notch in the mountains on the other side of Eureka Valley. Beyond this are the Sierra Nevada Mountains, still capped with snow in mid-May.

Why am I here? Because it’s my nature to be drawn to the wilderness. It’s the only cure for my particular illness: the restlessness that sometimes overcomes me. Because this is nearly the most remote, empty space I could find on a map of the United States. The standard road map is useful to me, insofar as it shows me places to avoid. But, I am also here to remove a burden from my shoulders.

I am here to shake off thirteen years of routine and

boredom—the essence of a cubicle-bound existence. For some time now I’ve been existing but not really living. Maybe the so-called “American Dream” is not for me. Somehow it seems wasteful to spend your youth preparing for retirement, putting off dreams until you’re older, retired, and have a big, fat Cadillac to chase them in. What if you don’t live that long? We’re told that we must accumulate as much stuff as possible—homes, vacation homes, cars, big-screen televisions—and work long and hard enough to pay for all of it. “The full catastrophe,” as Zorba would say.

Not for me. I’m going to live now. Too often I see people who, instead of chasing their dreams, chase what they’re told they’re supposed to chase. They become zombies, driving thoughtlessly the same route to work every day to a job they despise but cannot leave. Their senses are numbed by the onslaught of the sounds of civilization—traffic noise, blaring televisions—becoming oblivious to the natural beauty of the world around them, dying inside, year after year until they’re just worn out. Their defenses collapse, their muscles and brains atrophy and weaken, and they become susceptible to pulled groins, hemorrhoids, sore backs, furrowed brows, grumpy dispositions, and debilitating mental illness, like depression or religion.

Ambrose Bierce, the crotchety, cynical old author of *The Devil’s Dictionary*, refused to give up and rot away in a retirement home. Instead, he escaped to Mexico and was never seen again.

While I wouldn't choose the same path, I admire his defiance and determination to live life on his own terms. I have my own ideas of how I want to live, and I intend to do it until the end. In my old age, I want to still be walking in the mountains with an open trail in front of me and a bandanna on my head. That is my "American Dream."

I am here to carry the burden of my past into the desert and leave it there for the sun to bake and wreck. But I'm still standing here. This burden I'm carrying is heavy and I have become soft. I'm hesitating.

We are too far removed from nature. We have a cocoon of safety around us. The walls of our homes protect us from the weather, a grocery store and Starbucks are just up the street; help is only a phone call away. And though I love the wilderness, though I daydream about being in the mountains with a pack on my back, though the sight of a mountain sunrise nearly breaks my heart, though I've never been as at home as when I'm as far from civilization as I can get, I too have come to rely on that cocoon. So that now, standing here in the silent desert heat with



Ferry Pretty by Sherry Polley
6" x 9" Lithograph

the prospect of a long, solitary hike before me, I begin to wonder: What the hell am I doing? What if I get hurt out there, or get sick? Help is not on the way. I have children to raise. I should get back in the car and drive away.

But no. I fear having regrets more than I fear whatever may happen to me in the next few days. I have traveled two thousand miles to do this, and I will.

Seven miles of solitary desert hiking separates me from Marble Canyon. Seven miles of sun-baked desert pavement, mesquite and creosote bush, leopard lizards and banded geckos, mocking ravens and ominously circling vultures, and the figments of my imagination. "The stone grows cold," says the poet. "Eternity is not for stones."¹ But that's not true in this valley. Only the stones have eternity here. I have only one short life. My backpack is ready. All I have to do is start walking.

*

High velocity rifle bullets are capable of traveling great distances, with great accuracy. This is why snipers and big game hunters use rifles instead of shotguns. Shotguns are for close-up work: bank robberies, pheasant hunting, home protection. The metallic clank of a shotgun shell being loaded into its chamber is enough to convince most intruders to take their business elsewhere.

Inside a shotgun shell are hundreds of tiny steel pellets. When a shotgun is fired, these pellets are expelled in a lightly concentrated spray. The pellets are small, light and round, all of which cause their energy to dissipate quickly in the air. The effective range of a shotgun is only about fifty yards. And that is a fact that has had a profound effect on my life.

One day, while we were pheasant hunting, Dillon, my stepfather, raised his shotgun to his shoulder, pointed it at my dog, Tammy, and pulled the trigger. But it was too late.

Dillon, my stepfather, raised his shotgun to his shoulder, pointed it at my dog, Tammy, and pulled the trigger.

For two years he lingered: dying slowly and painfully.

When small, fast-moving creatures caught Tammy's eye, she was compelled by the very genes bred into her little Brittany Spaniel body to give chase. By the time Dillon pulled the trigger Tammy was a distant white blur in hot pursuit of a rabbit, oblivious to Dillon's mounting anger at her refusal to come back.

Over the years I'd grown used to Dillon's irrational outbursts of anger. They never really amounted to anything serious—he never hit me. He could be kind, but he could also be very cold. I never knew which Dillon would come home from work. I was always tense around him, but I thought I understood him and thought we had reached a kind of unspoken understanding. That is, he could have his anger, and I would just stay out of the way. But on this day he crossed a line that I didn't even know existed. Tammy's refusal to obey drove him to such a fit of anger that he was willing to kill her.

He pulled the trigger—the pellets fell harmlessly to the ground. But nevertheless, damage was done. I too had a shotgun in my hands. In the aftermath of this moment, which lasted perhaps two seconds, I realized that I would have shot Dillon if he had killed my dog. It would have been an instantaneous, unthinking, emotional reaction rather than a conscious choice, but I would have done it.

I sometimes wonder what my life would have been like if that had happened, and whether I'd be sorry. And I wonder at how strange and incomprehensible life can be. Choices made in a split second can determine the course of your whole life.

*

Silence is a physical presence in this desert. No wind, no sound of water, no buzzing insects. Anything alive and with sense is hiding from the withering heat. My ears are ringing. I can hear my heart pounding. Then, far above me, two ravens fly, their wings beating the air. Then silence again.

I'm now halfway across the valley to Marble Canyon.

From the road the desert looked flat. It's not. The land undulates. There are washes (dried up gullies from rain that fell who knows when), inexplicable piles of stones, split and blackened boulders. This is a strange land. I find things. A rusted tin can, a spent artillery shell, a rusty string of unused .50 caliber machine gun bullets. I should watch my step.

There is also delicate beauty—wildflowers left over from an unusually wet winter. Everywhere, sprouting from the desert pavement, are salmon-colored globemallow, goldpoppy, pink and purple desert fivespot, larkspur, orange desert mariposa, golden primrose, and on the upper slopes of the valley: brilliant pink flowering prickly pear cactus and desert Indian paintbrush. They seem to defy the heat and the stones. The land is so dry it's hard to believe rain has ever fallen here. But it has, and the wildflowers are taking advantage of the remaining moisture while it lasts. Soon they will succumb to the summer heat, leaving only dried stems, the remnants of their brief, beautiful lives.

Even though this valley is dry, it's apparent that water has had a dramatic, violent impact on the desert. The whole valley is carved with the dried stream channels that carry water when it does rain, usually in quick, devastating thunderstorms. In August 2004, a fast-moving storm dumped several inches of rain in the mountains near Badwater. The rain poured down Furnace Creek wash, carrying millions of tons of rock, destroying roads, buildings, and fatally burying two people in their car.

A lizard running frantically stops in front of me, his whole body expanding and contracting with each breath. He is tiny and speckled with metallic green and blue, and he is beautiful. Suddenly, as I'm standing in this vast, empty geography I'm aware of the smallness and brevity of my own life. "Life is strange and changeable," says the poet. "The meaning of moments passes like the breeze that scarcely ruffles the leaf of the willow."²

This is my moment in this desert. For a brief moment

this valley, with its mountains, wildflowers, and dunes, belongs to me. The sky is big and blue and I'm alive. For this moment, that is enough.

*

I remember Dillon as a balding, middle-aged banker with a moustache who smoked a pipe and listened to Scott Joplin records. I was five years old when Dillon married my mother. He adopted me and I took his last name. He was a talented carpenter. He made sourdough pancakes, and fudge. He ate garden peppers until he turned red and sweat rolled down his face. Dillon showed me how to use his tools, he taught me how to fish, and he took me on walks in the woods near our home. He also taught me to hunt and on my tenth birthday he gave me a shotgun, the gun that I nearly turned on him two years later.

Although I have a relationship with my real father now, Dillon was the only father I knew when I was young. He was a restless, troubled, angry man with a violent temper. He scared me. He broke things, he punched walls, he screamed, and he yelled. He was not good at keeping his anger to himself. I could feel it emanating from him like heat from a stove. I kept my distance.

After he divorced my mother and left, leaving only the impression on the carpet where his dresser had been, my fear went away but was replaced by anger. I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life, or who I wanted to be. More than anything in the world, I just didn't want to be like Dillon. I rejected everything he taught and gave me, including his religion and his name.

When I was seventeen, Dillon died of cancer, which he suffered for two years. For two years he lingered: dying slowly and painfully. It seemed to me that his inexplicable anger, restlessness, bitterness, and inner turmoil had eaten away at him, killing him from the inside. He was buried on a hilltop cemetery on a muggy Iowa summer afternoon.

As years passed, as I began living my own life, making my own mistakes, my anger toward Dillon drained away. I began to feel sorry for him. Despite being surrounded by family that loved and cared for him, he must have been very lonely.

Dillon left his first wife and their three young children. Though he stayed in contact, and my step-brother and stepsisters spent summers with us, they grew up in Pennsylvania, while we lived in Iowa. He loved them, in his own way. I saw him cry after talking to them on the phone. But even now, twenty-three years after his death, my brother and sisters still have the unhealed wounds that came with being Dillon's children. He shut himself off from everyone, kept everyone at arm's length with his anger, and though we were all at his bedside when he died, he died very alone.

Buddhists say that desire is the source of all suffering. Our desire to cling to material things, our desire to cling to our loved ones, our desire to cling to our very own lives, all lead inevitably to suffering. What was Dillon clinging to? What was he looking for? More than likely, he probably didn't even know. He was driven by his impulsive anger and never stopped to consider the possibility that he could be happy if he'd just let it go.

I visited his grave a few years after he died. It was a cold winter day and the oak trees in the hilltop cemetery were bare and dark. His gravestone had sunk into the ground and it was covered with leaves. I thought maybe I'd have something to say to him. But I didn't. I never went back.

*

Night is falling on Marble Canyon dunes. I'm sitting on the highest dune, near my tent, a perch from which I can see across Eureka Valley. With my binoculars, I can barely make out a small glint of sun reflecting off my car windows. As the sun sets, mountain shadow creeps slowly across the valley toward the

Buddhists say that desire is the source of all suffering.

peaks on the other side. The Last Chance Range turns bright purple in the twilight. The sky turns from dark blue to black and stars appear. I suddenly feel very alone. I am very alone. No moon tonight. The evening breeze dies and silence descends on the valley.

For a moment, I imagine things in the dark: mountain lions, rattle snakes, dark and mysterious shapes moving across the dunes. But there's nothing there. No one here but me and these dunes and the wary foxes and coyotes who leave their tracks in the sand in their perpetual search for food. And now I'm too tired to care. If a cougar paws at my tent tonight, I'll toss him my trail mix and go back to sleep.

I am overcome with exhaustion, but I don't want to sleep yet. The air is cool but the sand is warm and I go for a barefoot walk around my temporary home on the dune. The starlight is bright enough to see by. My fears of being alone in the desert are gone, and though I've been here for only a day, somehow I feel at home here. The sand is soft and warm under my tent. With a wispy blanket of Milky Way

overhead, I fall into a deep, deep sleep.

*

Despite the fear, anger, and hurt feelings that Dillon brought into my family's lives, despite the fact that I used to define myself by not being Dillon, despite the fact that I believe

some of his restlessness rubbed off on me by association, I've decided that I have some reason to thank him. When I was thirteen he took me camping in the mountains east of the Wyoming Tetons. We hiked into the backcountry, above the tree line, and camped for several days. Far below us, clouds drifted through the valleys. We drank ice cold water from the stream that trickled down from the snowmelt of the peaks. Coyotes

howled in the night.

I breathed in the cold mountain air and it seeped into my bones.

Even Dillon seemed at peace, one of the few times I ever saw him truly happy.

When it was time to leave, I wanted to stay. I wanted



Riding the Eye of the Storm by Sean Benefiel
8" x 10" Photograph

to hike down the ridge near our camp, down to the valley, then on to the next mountain range, then the next, and never stop. When we came home from Wyoming, part of me stayed in those mountains.

Dillon unintentionally showed me the cure for my restlessness. But his anger and frustration with life were too much for even the mountains to cure. He never saw that his life could have been different. When I think of Dillon now, I still picture him with that shotgun raised to his shoulder. But I also picture him sitting by the fire in the Wyoming mountains, in his brief moment of happiness.

*

I awake in Marble Canyon before sunrise, a few pink clouds hovering on the eastern horizon. The sand is still warm from the previous day's heat and there are fresh coyote tracks near my tent. The air is clear and cool. I breathe in this clean, dry desert air taking in the smells of mesquite and sagebrush. I would stay here longer. I don't want to leave. But my food is gone and I have very little water left.

Reluctantly, I pack and begin the hike back across the valley. For a while I can follow my own tracks from the previous day, but I lose them. I stop occasionally to spot my car with the binoculars and adjust my course. The flowers are bright in the early morning sun. To the south are the white, towering shapes of the massive Eureka Dunes, dominated by the largest, the Sand Mountain, which rises seven hundred feet above the valley floor. I want to climb them, but those are for another day.

I have much company this morning. Lizards are scurrying, making their morning rounds before the heat of the day sends them into hiding. Hummingbirds buzz past me, taking advantage of the flowers' nectar before they dry up and disappear for the summer. A small fox scuttles through the mesquite ahead of me, his head low to the ground. The desert is not dead.

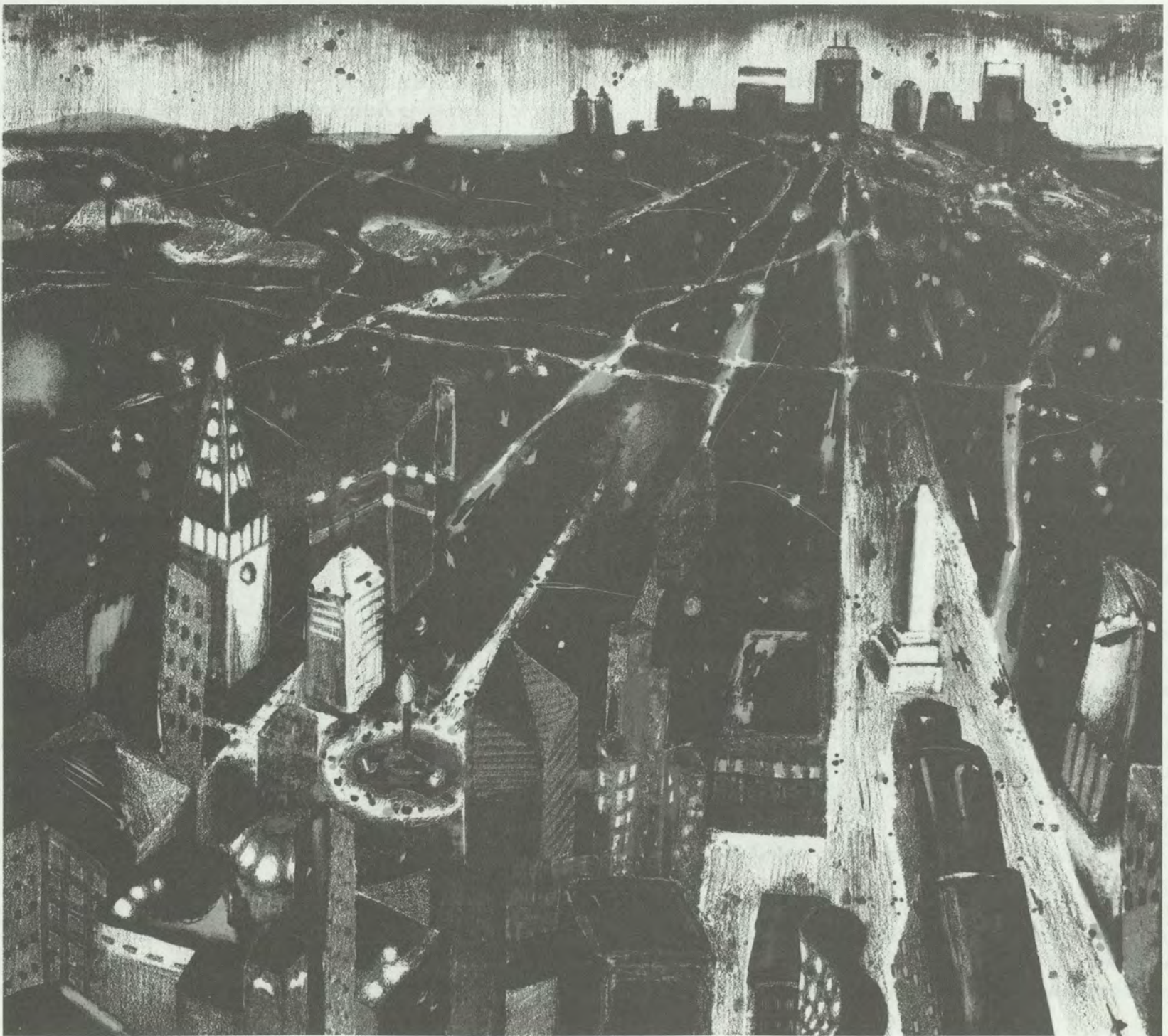
It's teeming with life. Somehow, this valley's residents have found a way to live despite the lack of water, despite the devastating sun and heat, despite all of the obstacles to their survival.

Finally, I reach the road and my car. I'm dusty, sweaty, filthy, and happier than I've been in a long time. I take my clothes off and stand naked in the road. If a car were coming I'd see it miles away, and I'm not sure I'd care. I've gone half native; my dark hair is light with desert dust; my burden is in Marble Canyon, beginning to bake in the morning sun. It doesn't stand a chance and I have no pity for it. I did my time in the corporate cubicle; it's time to move on. With a fresh change of clothes, food and water, I'm ready to leave this valley and drive the dusty, teeth-rattling seventy miles back to civilization.

The desert is indifferent and unchanged by my presence, but the feeling is not mutual. I give a bow of thanks. Marble Canyon and its dunes, this desert valley and its mountains, have a permanence that I, with my short life, cannot comprehend. I know it will always be here for me, if I want to come back. One last look at this harsh, dry, delicately beautiful valley, and it's time to get in the car. I'm ready to go home and face the future. ■

I did my time in the corporate cubicle; it's time to move on.

-
1. From *Presence of Eternity* – Eunice Tietjens
 2. From *All the King's Men* – Robert Penn Warren



Night Light by Sherry Polley
10" x 11.5" Lithograph

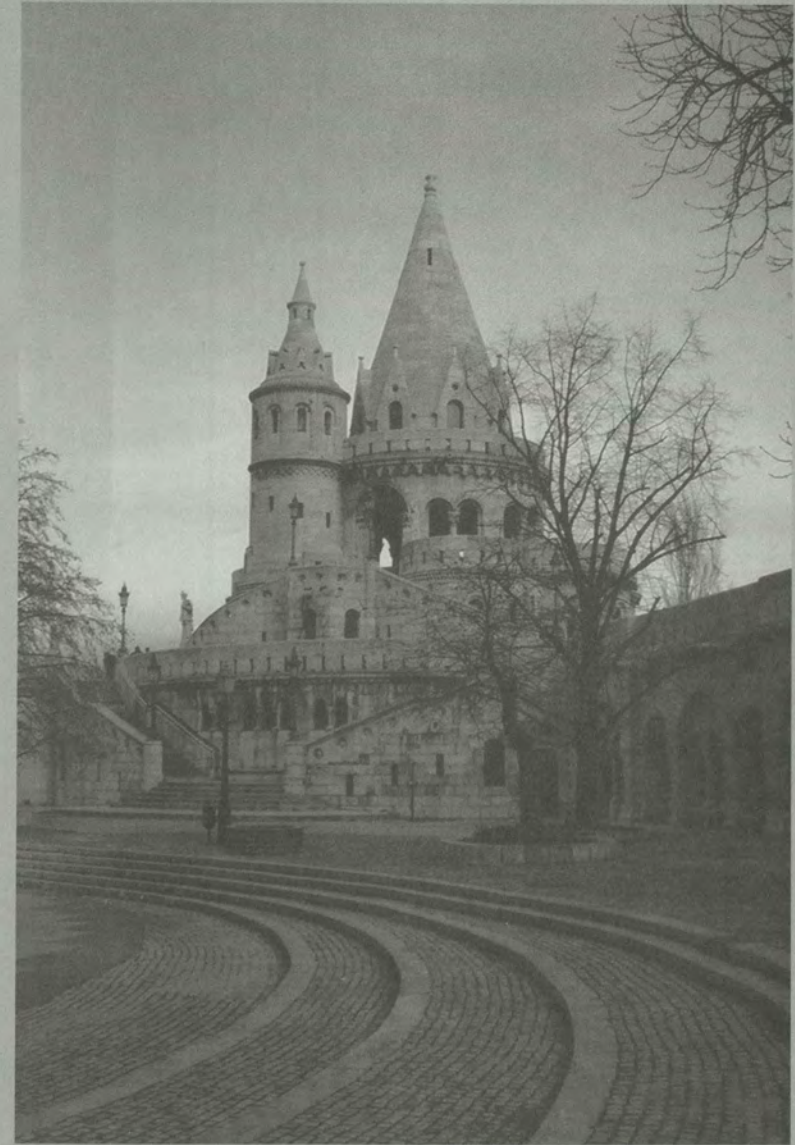
Slow Night by Joe Conley

Burned match heads nestle down
in a bed of gray
ashes like cloves packed
in the oiled paper
of an Indonesian cigarette.
Their odor is strong, distinct.
You stand
at the kitchen
counter slicing and salting
our meager
dinner of overripe avocado.

I sit behind
you and pour
two short glasses of summer
sweet red wine, spilling
it on your
winter table,
puddles like deer's blood
in the snow.
We eat;
we do not speak.

You run a sink full
of hot water
and while you slosh
your dishes in the lemon
scented suds I scatter flakes
of dry tobacco
all across the kitchen table.
The wine is
clotted, catching
earth-toned constellations
against the white celestial plane.

I roll one hard and even
cigarette and you sit down
to face me. You strike a match
and throw
it in the ashes
with its brothers.
We sit in silence, smoke swirling
up to the ceiling
like so many blue and massing stars.



Fisherman's Bastion, Budapest by Megan Brown
Photograph

Reason #17 to Avoid Self-Reflection by Lindsay Fernung

Today, Ginsberg wore a red dress.

In the bathroom mirror he stood laughing,
stroking his beard and poking me
where I might jump.

I do not dismiss his amusement as
I cannot forget my fear -

I've seen those grandmothers and their severity,
wringing hands with knobby buffered wrists
papery skin crackling as it flames under all that
friction.

Ginsberg twirls in the mirror, clouds of steam
obscuring his face and fogging his glasses so
suddenly all I know of him is a red skirt balloon,
that obvious mirth of a little girl in patent leather shoes,
and ankle socks with lace.

*23 years, man, is what I tell him,
and already I feel old,*

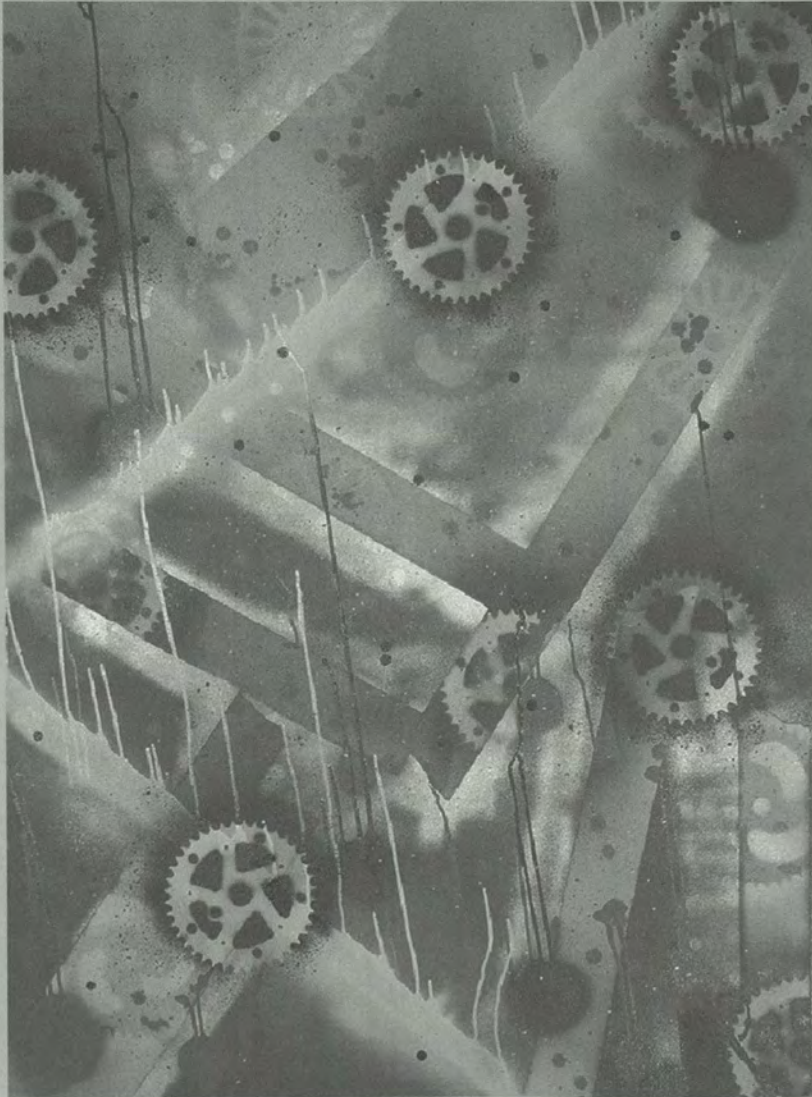
but he offers no reassurance and I am left again
to see my face in all its sincerity -
red cheeks just waiting for powder, for dry lips to
brush them at night

*(I have pampered my sense of strength,
worn steel to protect me,
met my friends in parks where we drank until we passed out).*

In four more years, say, my collars will start creeping up
pinching off my air supply until I am by myself a lonely
family portrait,
white lace collar on my black dress
and I will wear sensible shoes.

But

must my cheekbones hollow today;
must I follow the planes of my dismay
to a bitter cold 24th year?



Passion by Mark Pappas
48" x 36" Spray Paint on Canvas



Allegory of the Four Noble Truths by Jean Dan
11" x 14" Etching on Paper

Contributors' Notes

Brandon Anderson is a unique photographer who specializes in upscale portraiture, glamour shots, and contemporary art. He has a passion for freezing life's beauties, creating timeless joys through poetic eyes while capturing the essence of life.

Isaac Arthur is majoring in visual communication at Herron School of Art and Design. He writes and has an ongoing love affair with all things Photoshop.

Kimberly Balding loves photography. She is twenty-one years old and is in her second semester at IUPUI. She is a pre-fine arts major and a transfer student from Ancilla College.

Sean Benefiel is a down-to-earth guy with an unusual, quirky sense of humor. He is currently obsessed with reading and writing poetry as well as comedy. He reads comic books and drives an exotic car: a black 1997 Saturn station wagon. But he would not be above an upgrade if he wins the lottery.

Barbara Bennett is an English major focusing on creative writing. She is in her second semester at IUPUI and is just beginning to discover how many topics there are to write about.

Joe Bieschke is a sophomore studying painting and illustration at Herron School of Art and Design. He hopes to create artwork for film and literature. He currently works for the Herron and Marsh galleries. He also paints portraits and murals. His online gallery is viewable at www.aphexjb.deviantart.com.

Megan Brown is a senior English major. She is looking forward to more beautiful experiences including graduation in May of 2006.

Kay Castaneda, after many years of trying, received her Bachelor of Arts degree in English in 2005. She loves writing and IUPUI so much that she came back for more. She is currently a graduate student in English.

Joe Conley was born and raised in Indianapolis. He lives downtown and attends IUPUI for creative writing.

Gaylie R. Cotton has found a new respect for life and death and a great appreciation for the time spent between the two.

Jean Dan is a junior at Herron School of Art and Design, majoring in painting. He came to America from Vietnam eleven years ago. He is fascinated by classical artists such as Rubens, Rembrandt, da Vinci, and Valasquez. He strives to imitate the classical style in his paintings and drawings. To expand his knowledge and strengthen his talents, he also works with abstract and impressionistic styles.

Regina J. Devassy, born and raised in India, is a sophomore at Herron School of Art and Design. While studying in Findlay, Ohio she saw her first American winter. Her paintings are an attempt to express a blend of East and West.

David Dean Elery came to IUPUI as a business major in 1997. After a few too many electives in the School of Liberal Arts, David underwent a paradigm shift. He is now a philosophy major seeking the peaceful coexistence of Christians, Muslims, Jews, dogs, beans, cats, peas, the physical, and the metaphysical.

Louis Wheeler Every II was born in California but raised in Indiana. He hopes to attend Herron School of Art and Design in the fall. He plans to complete two degrees: new media and visual communication.

Lindsay Fernung is a senior studying anthropology. Her free time is divided pretty evenly between wondering how she and her roommates became a single entity and learning how to box on a punching bag named Charlie. She consistently makes bad shoe decisions.

Josh Flynn won the Spring 2005 *genesis* Best of Fiction award. He is an English major and a photographer. He has contributed articles to *Insight* magazine and the IUPUI SLA Alumni newsletter. He photographed the 2004 and 2006 boys' basketball state finals for the Indiana Basketball Record Book.

David Goodknight is a student at Herron School of Art and Design. He loves his sweet girlfriend Josie and his family. Although he can't have a pet in his current apartment, he also loves dogs and puppies.

Terri N. Graves is an English major with a concentration in creative writing. She loves to play in the dirt, enjoys dabbling with pen and paint, and was most recently seen covered in clay.

Glenn Guimond loves his wife and kids, but he's tired and his back hurts.

Kimberly L. Holly was born in Barbados, which happens to be the subject of most of her poetry. Poetry has always been an important part of her life. She is a wife, and a mother to Renith-Joy who, at age three, is a budding poet herself. Kimberly is a senior, currently pursuing a double major in psychology and English.

Monica Khurana is in her second year at Indiana University School of Medicine. She has enjoyed the exploration and creative expression through poetry since seventh grade. Her favorite poets include John Donne, Emily Dickinson, Edgar Allan Poe, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Rabindranath Tagore.

Robbin Malooley is a general fine arts major with concentrations in printmaking and ceramics. Her work focuses on the continuing conflict between Man and Nature as well as the need to express the beauty she sees in the natural world. Her purpose is to accentuate all things natural.

Philip McNealy is a graduate student studying geographic information systems at IUPUI. His story, "Wandering Death Valley," is a very personal, mosaic piece that describes some of his experiences hiking in Death Valley.

Stephanie Means is a sophomore studying visual communications at Herron School of Art and Design. She enjoys photography and writing. Art allows her to express herself and take a break from reality. She wants to thank her mother for supporting her.

Beth Mink is a journeyman industrial electrician with a horribly handsome husband, two intensely intelligent male offspring, three dogs that shed a lot, and an old yellow Jeep. Beep Beep.

Desiree Moore, who loves to write poetry, is in her second year at Herron School of Art and Design studying photography.

Ken Nurenberg is a junior at Herron School of Art and Design majoring in printmaking.

Mark Pappas is from Indianapolis. He is attending Herron School of Art and Design and hopes to pursue a career in printmaking. He is an avid bicycle rider who competes in BMX freestyle competitions as often as he can.

Sherry Polley is currently pursuing a Bachelor's degrees in printmaking and art education at Herron School of Art and Design. The creation of artwork is fundamental to her lifestyle; it helps her analyze and organize her fleeting thoughts and emotions. She hopes to teach others to use art in this way, to embrace the creative process, and to enjoy the finished product.

Mick Powers, a student at IUPUI, hopes his story, "Early Warning," will be interesting and enjoyable to readers.

Clint Smith is an Honors graduate from The Cooking and Hospitality Institute of Chicago, Le Cordon Bleu, and is currently the Chef Instructor in the Culinary Arts Department at Central Nine Career Center. When he is not teaching, he enjoys writing, raking leaves, reading himself to sleep, and Chaos.

Michael Springer, as a child, finished coloring books at an amazing rate, because he only used the color red and only colored the eyes on every page. And he wasn't very careful about staying inside the lines.

Wade Terrell Tharp is an IUPUI Writing Fellow.

Megan Wells is a twenty-year-old freshman at Herron School of Art and Design. After college, she hopes to never stop creating and somehow sustain herself on an artist's salary. She enjoys reading, knitting, drawing, buying things she can't afford, and watching Project Runway.

Heather Eileen White creates photography about the act of looking. She will graduate in May 2006 with a BFA in photography from Herron School of Art and Design. She currently works as a photographer for University College at IUPUI while taking care of four children with her husband, David.

Nicholas Hayden Wiesinger is a super-senior majoring in photography at Herron School of Art and Design. He plans to attend graduate school next year and then take over the world with the help of his cats: Vishnu and Vivian. Here are some changes to look forward to during their world domination: lower gas prices, a greater dependence on foreign food, and more furry toys filled with catnip.

Alan Williams is a graduate student from Indianapolis working on his Master of Arts degree in English.

Beth Zyglowicz dabbles in a little bit of everything. She is an illustration major at Herron School of Art and Design, but has recently decided to undertake a major in Japanese as well. She isn't sure what the combination of these two fields might result in. More of her work can be seen at www.flameraven.deviantart.com.

Calling All Designers!

We are looking for help from the New Media and Visual Communications sectors of IUPUI—or any qualified students—to help implement an interactive website for *genesis*. If you are interested, please contact us via email at genesis1@iupui.edu or email Hannah Haas at hhaas@iupui.edu. You may be able to earn credit, judge submitted art, and work on the production of the magazine.

Thank you,
genesis

\$100 Prizes for Best of Issue Poetry, Fiction, Creative Non-Fiction, and Art!

All submissions due by: Friday, October 20th 2006

E-Mail Submissions:

E-mail submissions are preferred for all genres if possible. Please include your name, title, contact information, a short biographical note (no more than fifty words), genre, medium, and dimensions in the body of an e-mail and submit each piece of work as an attachment. Do not include your name in this attachment as all submissions are judged anonymously.

Send submissions to:

genesis1@iupui.edu

Writers' Guidelines:

Literary submissions must be sent via e-mail as Microsoft Word attachments. All genres should be in Times New Roman font, single-spaced, and contain no more than **3,500** words. Students may submit a maximum of **nine** pieces: **five** poems and **two** prose pieces per genre. Do not put your name on the manuscripts.

Artists' Guidelines:

A maximum of **five** art submissions may be sent via e-mail or on a CD as EPS, TIFF, or JPEG files with a **minimum resolution of 300 dpi**. Include titles, media, dimensions and a short bio, but your name should not appear on the work itself. Please note that all artwork, except those which go on the front and back covers, will be reproduced in black and white. All CDs should be put in the *genesis* mailbox in Cavanaugh Hall room 502-L. E-mail genesis1@iupui.edu for information on scanning high-resolution images or submitting original artwork.

genesis

**c/o Department of English
Cavanaugh Hall, Room 502-L
425 University Boulevard
Indianapolis, Indiana 46202
genesis1@iupui.edu**

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