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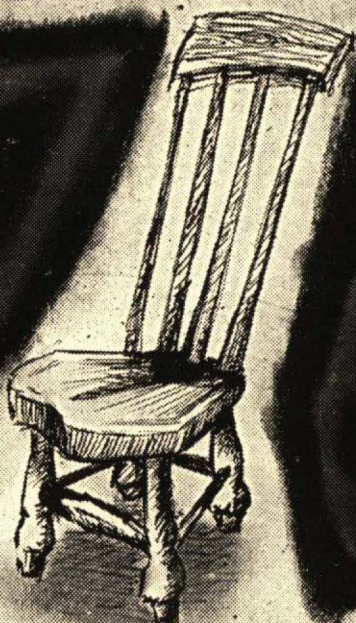
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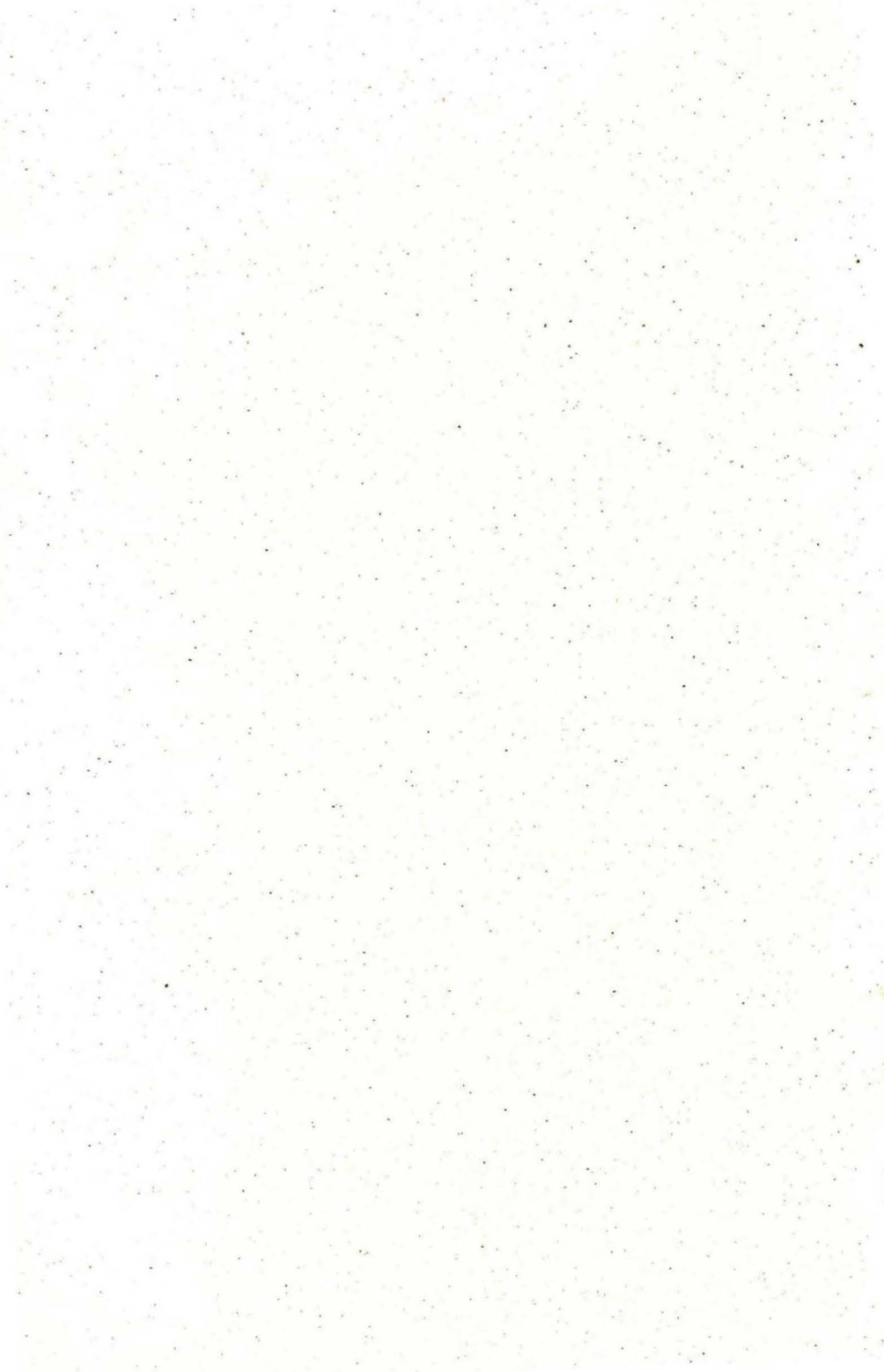
SPRING 1997

The Roaring Muse

Literary Arts Magazine



Spring
1997



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May 1997. "The Roaring Muse" is created by the UMD Literary Guild Publication Committee.

Submissions or comments can be sent to UMD Literary Guild, Rm 410 Humanities Bldg., 10 University Dr., Duluth, MN 55812, c/o English Dept. "The Roaring Muse" cannot be duplicated without the expressed written permission of the UMD Literary Guild. E-mail Address: litguild@ub.d.umn.edu.

As I am dressing my children in the morning, pouring milk
over their cereal,

tying their shoes, wiping their chins,

I think.

As I wash the dishes, towel them dry, and put them away,

I think.

I sweep the dirt into the dust pan, mop and wax the floor,

I think.

I put the dirty clothes into the washer, wet ones into the dryer,
the dry ones I carefully fold, while

I think.

I slide the folded clothes into the assigned dresser while

I think.

I think,

as I dust the dresser with one of the odd socks.

I think

as I prepare the list of the things I need to do.

I think

while I make lunch, and begin to prepare for dinner.

I think

as I drive out to the grocery store, carefully picking out the
ingredients, and checking out

I think,

as I chop the produce, and create a mixture of nutrients.

As I clear the table

I think.

As I bathe the little ones,

I think.

I brush their long hair, and as I braid

I think.

I tuck them into bed, read them a story, kiss them good night,
and then

I think.

What has become of me? What will become of them?

She Sometimes Visits Me
on the Sauna Porch

Jess Koski

I am fooling no one.
I've made myself vulnerable,
ready for another self-indulgent communion
with the dream self you send to spy on me.

I've laid bare
body and mind and spirit
in the traditional way--
the extremes of heat and cold and alcohol.

I've placed the sprigs of sage on the
heat-agitated rocks,
to go through their death throes and up, in
the smoke
that is said to placate spirits.
A hollow gesture.

For it is a holy time; mid-winter, full-moon,
cold enough to cause the crows to topple
from cedar branch
to snowbank,
and I should know better.

I stand and walk toward the lit doorway,
and shed the shroud of steam as I enter.

2*22*97

Jason Beug

tonight there was a
rainbow around the
moon

a subtle maroon,
purple and green
shining insideout
through the haze

the camera is behind
my eyeball
my fingertips are broken

incidentally, there's no
use, the sound is too
faint

it's a one time one
shine moment making
the relation so
quaint

As swiftly flow the ancient rivers
Against the hand of modern man,
So looms the eroding horizon ahead
Changing, as the river changes, with time
Such a merciless ruler, time
That with no tenderness or sentiment of touch
Etches its passing, from flesh to bones to dust
As surely upon the man as upon the river
It watches a child splashing barefoot in the shallows
The young man, embracing his lover against the current
The old man, staring sightlessly from the deep
And the river that flows on
Sovereign time, who, like the river, has no end
But winds itself in ever intricate patterns
Through the heart and the mind of man.
Circling him in its enduring embrace
And when the river gorge lies silent
Its waters long since stilled in a sandy grave,
A child tumbles his way down the winding road home
And time changes, and the river flows.

My Mountain

Ariel Carls

the wuuds they poooors out
like syrup sliding sticky stuck
onto the pile of goop they droply slurp
and carry with them wild weight that's heavy
crazy but never free but
still they's a 'coming out and don't you even try
you hear?
don't you even slide your sneaky sneaky smile
under my mountain
'cause it'll get stuck there i tell ya
stuck
stuck in the words
and they'll just keep slippin' throoooouu
deep deeeep deep into you

Heirloom

Tera Welbourn

The mother has awoken with the dread
lays like stones in place of their fragile souls
once inside.
She calls out three times the child's name
breaking up the nite.

Yet so silent are the feet
placed carefully on each carpeted step.
notices the grey
slippers, the eyes sleepy,
searching one hand on each side
mother touches the face of the child,
the cheek damp and warm
as heartache brews.

The daughter folds herself up,
ties down the child, the life that now
weeps from her own womb.
Still fresh, this first burden.
The heart's initial chain,
so sweet its weight,
her anchor to reality.

When first the girl bled
the mother smiled
and thought herself a silent bird.
For the first time a woman
being the mother of a women.
now the daughter herself,
unsure of this gift,
wanting instead to become it.
attempts to carry sunlite on her back
tonite down the stairs,
tonite to mother herself.
to be much older,
without the years,
with only the seed.

Bed of Wind

Sarah Paro

These hands
That once grasped
Other hands in the night
Now ease a baby's back.

The fingers strum
The lines by her own eyes.

They clench into fists
But relax again
To smooth the sheets
On her bed of wind.

Daydreams

Sarah Paro

Daydreams of you
And a chocolate rose.
Laying the pieces in your
mouth
One by one
And the heat of your tongue
Tasting and melting
The tender sweet petals.

A sick heart is a child
a fragile infant's low moans
never escaping the incubator,
seedlings germinating
during overcast weeks.

It needs more than chicken soup
and bubble baths and popsicles
to bring its fever down to earth.
It is beneath sea, heavy,
sliding through coma, practically dead.
And calls upon a healing force
kept secret between the circle
of gods and enlightened ones.

For Christmas, I unraveled a scroll
of their thoughts and fears, before
they saw the sun clear,
lips equaling earth.

Each word,
sculpted through slow centuries -
each word,
once traveled pale
that first energy level, that mother,
that bubble of thick skin -
really, a wall pumped full
of blood and illusion.

And when the body exhaled
in that era before
in the era recycled,
words slide simple as ghosts,
replace those restless pecking birds
with a calm step and breath.

Today, my friend, as you stepped off the bus,
I noticed at once, the sick heart's grey matter
had seeped into your dazzling green eyes,
contaminated silver energy veins,
that sinking loss of love and shine.

I could say it will leap out free,
to dance at this world's request, still
you are me insides out, I am sensitive,
you are a foreigner here and
would not recognize it as English.
Blurred through tears it would leave no mark -
you are riding on the real: sweat, salt, puke
shaking deep pain piercing empty center.

I can only place cards on the carpet,
lay out a red-gold future for you -
kiss your forehead, brush your hair,
bathe it in oils of rosemary and peppermint,
said to lift the spirits, said nothing
of the spirit imprisoned in the sick heart.
Soon. Soon. Soon.
The words will call you to them.
You will know the beauty of stretch

Selected Haiku from "Knowhere"

Mike Lenz

the sun squinting my
eyes, making my cheeks hot, my
nose too, this morning.

i love the broken buildings
in black and white cracked
cement. vibrant with slow ruin.

where are you in my
moment? the coins on my eyes
are cold for your shine.

the wind is warm and heaving.
my feet heavy on
the earth. my soul shines soft gold

the moon is in the
asphalt with ragtime sadness
and endless night rain.

reflections in glass
and tile. cold porcelain. my
dim fluorescent soul.

On the Death of Allen Ginsberg

Mike Lenz

Friday April Fourth
Ginsberg is dying slow death
 eaten by invisible disease.
Soon to be nothing more than a lonely
 incandescent skull chattering toward dawn.
As lonely as he ever was
As lonely as I ever was
As we ever were in
 America the lonely.

Saturday April Fifth
And where is he now?
Chasing with equal insanity the insane
 lovers and beloved mentors of his youth
Lamenting machinery and porcelain.

I will find him in every sunflower
 carrying one to his grave.

I thought I had forsaken you Allen Ginsberg
That I owed you a pilgrimage
But there is nothing. There can be nothing.
You, a forlorn bearded guru, gracious and alone
 Lingering even now in the shadows and broken sidewalks.
Won't America be lonely, too?
 Without your insistent taunting.
You worked so hard to develop her sense of humor
 only to be laughing yourself, echoing, chanting kaddish
 in the empty halls of your memory
(In those halls you were reflected back to your own lamentable genius.)

Weeping!
Weeping after Whitman...
Weeping after Carl...
Weeping after Neal...and Jack!
Weeping after your mother
 And after the night and the streets and the rain.

And I wept, Allen Ginsberg.
What! No tears for your grandfather?
Not even one!
And yet, still weeping after the homosexual, the communist, the "unamerican critter"
 After an old man with the perfect right to die.
You rattle in my typewriter.
Standing in the moonlight.
Standing in the daylight.
You dance on my window sill.
...and quiver...
At the madness and the loneliness and the beauty and the joy.
I quiver too, Allen Ginsberg.
"how it feels to lose"
And I do owe you a pilgrimage
 a sacred sunflower torch carried across America

And even that unsuitable.

Perhaps I will step from the curb and cast two dollars
and twenty-seven cents into the street

But what of inflation?

I'm not sure I can afford this tribute.

What is the price of your joy and your sorrow?

My pockets are empty.

My heart echoing with your name

Allen Ginsberg----allah ginsberg...

I'm looking out my window and I see all the way

to New York to San Francisco to Denver, Sacred Denver!

I see you in a black & white photograph.

Unchanged.

That is where my pilgrimage will lead me

over and over with only the quick ring of the telephone

or the sudden scream of sirens to bring me back

Startled.

The You And The They

Jake Wermerskirchen

You are all Excalabur. Each and every one
wielding a brain; a screaming
edge.

You, lying in a pit of dark water, not breathing,
not knowing that the hilt rests so near your
closed eyes and mind.

They, the masses are stealing your sword, and still you nap.

It's high noon in the street!

Still the button is pushed, the potion injected, the tranquilizer feeds disregard.

They are afraid of your Excalabur mind; pricked a thumb on your edge
but water will rust even tempered steel.

You, find a stone. Throw sparks in the eyes of bigots and bathroom wall philosophers.

Make them know that their indifference

the tranquilizer, has run a course

through your blood

and now is

dead.

Etch your blade with sharp words like "I have a dream," "Redemption Songs," and
"Up for the Down Stroke."

So when they say, nigger, faggot, cutie, or ugly,

You, show them your Excalabur mind.

i got restless
on the way.
in the claustrophobic confines
of my gray machine as i burned
fuel and risked my life on the
choppy highway.
until i spotted a wide open field.

swinging the door open, my feet
stomped over weeds that had toiled
their way through cobbled pavement.
a gust of wind from a
semi-truck resembling
one of darth vader's storm troopers
blew a stand of hair in my face.

i plopped down on damp grass and enjoyed the
changing of a spring afternoon into wide open night.
and i noticed how the telephone poles tilted
sideways

pushed by the insistent daily creep of soils
frozen and thawed, grain by grain.

what a simple process, requiring only time, and warmth, and cold,
but having tumultuous results
just the way you should inch into me
and flourish,
to leave me wide open.

Distant Dreams

M.L. Markey Dwyer

Everything keeps coming back to the things I know happened.
Growing up, getting married, having children, I know these things
happened.

Yet it seems so foggy, like a distant dream.

Now I sit here on the beach. The water flowing back and forth
over my toes and back and away, like one of the kids playing come catch me.

How long have I been sitting here? The water is up to my chest
and all around me, yet I can't move away from it, or maybe I just don't want to.

Look at the fish. Their fins look like flowing satin veils. I reach
out to caress them. Smooth as silk, colors running into each other.

In the end all is darkness and dreams.

Grant Crevier

Kara Palas

The rocks are weeping
tears deploy
She's still in the hospital
We know its a boy

My heart is burdened with anxiety
We trust our lives
To Earth bound gods
Who are merely
Members of a higher society

So I wait for a pot to ring
Or a phone to boil
Allowing my heart again to shine

The chance to tell you
How your father stood
By your mother's side
Kissed her forehead
Held her hand
And softly brushed the hair back from her
Face

Insight

Jon Thorson

I touch the swirling light
spinning through my soul
Slowly my eyelids begin to swell
as I squint to see what time will tell
Evolution is my back
piercing through my mind
Instinctual habits crawl from the vines
or walk from the ponds beneath great pines
Hairless creatures conquering the new creator
Vibrating matter assembles a new star
and distinctly learns to orbit the dangerous
fire
A primate's battle with a rumored god has been won

Here, in the Homeland, the Winter sun skitters along the
tree-tops,
the designated eunuch, called forth day after day,
casting its muttering sort of light in quiet, cold complaint.

There, where the long-distance bus lines deposit our widowed
fathers and our children like so much detritus of a receding
glacier,
the Sun shouts its lusty light into rusted eyes,
and its heat at woolen hand-me-downs.

And here, yet, I play Sisyphus to the sun, as I feed frozen
blocks of firewood to the insatiable stove.

In these least light days
my world moves in restricted radii.
The sun in an arms-length arc around me,
and me--
around my Sun powered woodstove.

Outside, where Cold has a choke-hold on the cycles
of air and water and chlorophyll,
the black trees wait
still
for Winter to shudder and release
and Spring to sigh
and, at last, come.

My only remnant of Summer (which I'll defend to my frozen end)
is this six-foot radius of tropics surrounding my woodstove.
And, when I can spare the time and tinder, I'll spend a half
day firing the old sauna.

At dusk I will trudge
 through the squeaking snow
 down the hill toward the steamed
 window light, bearing my blessed offerings
 of cedar, sage, water and the bottled, distilled
 "blood" of the old country, my mind replays-
 -over and over--a summer day, filled with
 your sun-lit body, and a blast of heat,

like.... thisssss.

I Saw a Drawing of a Man; a black man

Jake Wermerskirchen

I saw a drawing of a man; a black man
 whose eyes told me,
 "Heaven and Hell will crack and fall before I lose my way."
 Then he told me about history.
 "There was no shot heard 'round the world to mark this fight.
 The audio segments of this war sound like
 a tv tube popping
 iron bars slamming
 the cry of a toothless baby
 the sigh of a child mother
 and the news headlines 'brother killing brother for the money on each other,'
 and for shoes."
 Then he told me I could sleep at night.
 "This chain-linked battle is across town; in backyards and playgrounds
 where children play dodge-ball
 on bare feet."
 And a hand covered his mouth but still his eyes told me,
 "The worst of these sounds is the air;
 unformed and passing between your lips and teeth
 without a single word attached."
 And before he turned away I saw a locomotive, a railroad no longer underground,
 reflected in his stare.
 and he told me that one day he would,
 "...rattle and rhyme and swing down low on those sweet iron tracks."

Dawn is slowly rising,
shedding light over confusion.
Hidden, shadowed pathways
grow bright with disillusion.
Why does the murky darkness,
which holds ignorant frightful tears,
give way to clarity and completeness
when only the blackness has disappeared?
Where once lied tempest waters
allays certainty and direction;
No thoughts are left blindly searching
deceiving hallways of misconceptions.
Love pours in with winds,
carrying trust and assurance.
They blow through weak, insecure thoughts
leaving a sweet, enduring fragrance.
The soul is left to marvel
the newly discovered treasures;
After years of cold, sunless skies,
the warmth gives endless pleasure.
This new sprung fountain of enlightenment
conveys feelings of hope for tomorrow.
Confusing fears of the unknown
lose its grasp to knowledge that feeds power.
The enticement of the change
beckons the partaker from the watcher.
The soul is drawn to the source
that provides support to the awakened.

Untitled

Jason Beug

outside of the hourglass vacuum
mixed with the rain and shine and
soil there is a constant yet the disciples
follow after a focus through doors of
hallway words hoping to find a
translation of freedom perhaps
one that he or she had written but
where and when the moisture is
always frozen white no one questions
why steadily still people move on through
going nowhere with infinite destinations
the steady ones shake their
rattlesnakes and watch the winds
change plain people as they are
sleeping and walking to anywhere
on the street when pat robertson pulls
up after coaching a monk how to enjoy
the middle of a majesty then twice the other
way around and to you says i'll give you a
free ride too keep your feet from hurting
you say no but he insists he'll personally
ask why in a telephone call by five
he drove away showing up two minutes
late as an honorary judge at the
semi-moron cripples superbowl
debate but before it was over the
hour glass got plugged with a kidney
stone newton gave it a shake and broke
the glass then pat helped sift time
into a straight line threw the damn
stone into the lake until maybe it
comes up from the bottom and
perhaps someone walking on
the shore will pick it up for
no apparent reason

Eclipse

Jennifer Todd

you were an eclipse on the
veranda - squeezing the breath out of my
lungs... i find it hard to breathe in your dark
night.

Ode to bare skin (or the art of being nude)

Jennifer Todd

here I am, happy and naked
walking these floors as if they're my own
you - lying soft and smiling lazily
stretched out like some blissful tiger
on the plains of the Serengeti

The Duluth Zoo

Ted Anderson

It was the mountain lions:
searing grey, eyes the luster of border-lakes,
eight of them,
caged.

It is important to sing to animals.
I could not, though, sing to them;
my steps led away,
crushing the thin shells
of some speckled wood.

That Indians filled their prints
with yellow pollen, that they briefly
caressed near the wild brook,

had become a memory.

If You Touch Me

Aaron Trompeter

If you touch me I might not let go.
I might creep inside your body;
silent and soft; a lover's touch.
I might merge,
become part of you,
enter your being smoothly, effortlessly as air
delicate as a butterfly's kiss,
inhale and exhale in unison,
then curl up in a distant corner of your heart.
If you kiss me;
If you hold me;
If you touch me.

u 'n' i verse

Aimee Dunn

I felt as though
 my face had been lifted up
 And kissed by a star.
As I opened my eyes once again
 I beheld the night sky
 In all its wondrous life.
The leaves of the trees
 outlined softly against the dark
The wind
 blowing my hair against my face
The smell
 of the freshly uncovered earth
The life
 of my world
 and of those other worlds
 sang all around me
 in the black stillness
 of which i was an integral part.

If I die doing what I love,
 I am not dead.
If I die in the heat of battle
or on frozen rivers shifting with the sun,
 I am not dead.
If I am to die in winter's grip
the wolves will come and surely strip;
my bones,
be strong,
gain strength from my flesh and live!
 I am not dead.
If I am lost from within your thoughts
my body will lay and slowly rot
from nothing
to nothing,

 Just dead.

Survival

Kremena Tzoneva

These are hard times -
no second opinion.
All kinds of mistakes happen
and delusion roars.

Who wants, he cannot.
Why a chance to the fool
you generously gave, Father?
Another struggles in vain.

How can we live
just with a naked hope?
And the world lies to us-
pushing with it's arms.

A light circle of questions
broke the dead silence.
And despite our barefeet
we carry the sparkle.

Cig in the Dark

James Kwon

pillow porridge talk,
turning arrows of sinking flames,
mooring the roar.
Thoughts in lazer zap war,
arching breaking, taking the flame.

After the song sought coupling,
the banter breaks the solumn hold
of open lotus union,
killing the primal page
emptying the vessel of sin.

Leaving the vehicle of landed ecstasy
back to the military of regimented form,
place and time tame,
drained of exalted possession.
Abandoning the rich vibrations of
uncollared slavery,
Losing each other between the words.

Corolla Freed

James Kwon

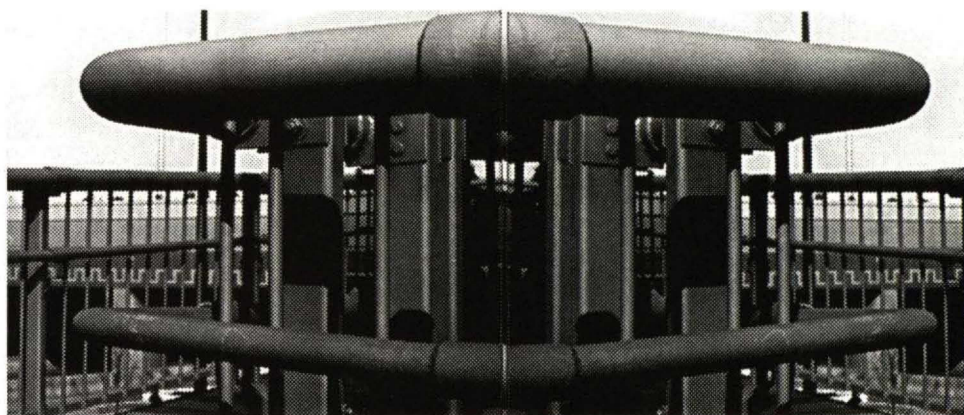
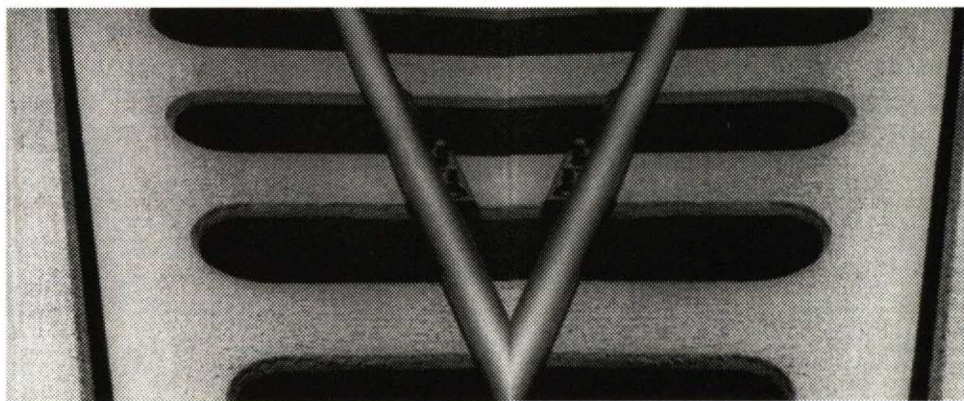
Sun splatter in gleaming fractal rays,
illumination of glistening motes, wavering light.

Walking the melting earth of tick-tock drop,
warm, in the cerlurean depths of sunshine sky.
Water pools give the effort to shine,
while crystal white flakes melt in the divine.

I walk in sordid confusion of the tactile source,
more married to the dull red lying behind my
eyes, the crimson desert dawn.

Than the business of deviation, time-scales, and
schedule, the armor, armoni sOn.

No, no, it whispers instead of screams...
It moves to that feel of orange satori behind
closeD I's.



Gypsy Water

Jake Wermerskirchen

I pointed out across the obsidian lake. Campfires flickered on the opposite shore. I knew what his answer would be because I asked the question often.

"Who is that over there grandpa?"

"Those are the gypsies," he said.

Every Fourth of July weekend I asked that question, and every year visions of exotic women washed into my young head. Jewelry glittered wildly off the flames and bright flowing silks floated in the fire's warm draft. I imagined a painted carnival tent full of treasures that temp children under the canopy. The best of these were the crystals. Clear, perfect balls of light that could reveal the future or bring back the past. That was their perfection. They could bring back the past.

I left grandpa on the dock. Even with him there I was afraid of the lake and how it sat like a flat, glassy palm waiting to close.

Like grandpa's stories, I could not remember the first time I came to the cabin for the Fourth of July. The next day we would bring lawn chairs down to the beach to watch the fireworks over the water. All of my aunts and uncles were there, and my cousins; nearly twenty in all.

That year a humming rope of tension ran through the small cabin. For years we had all been sitting contentedly like an opera audience and now we winced at a misstruck chord. I had been the only one in the back seat on the ride to the lake, and now nobody occupied the bunk below me. My brother wouldn't see the fireworks this year or any other.

Our own campfire burned near the beach. I always had trouble deciding if we should put it out so the gypsies wouldn't find us, or build it up to scare them away. I joined my cousins to listen to our uncle tell a story. We made a circle around him. He began slowly, like a song building to crescendo. The fire made his eyes glow like twin rising moons. At the climax of his dark children's story he raised both arms over his head like a bear and some dark liquor fell from his glass onto the fire. The rush of heat turned my face. I decided to walk up to the cabin.

Terrifying as it was I turned and glanced behind. Across the empty, vaulted lake the gypsy fires drummed an intoxicating rhythm. The crystals seemed so close, and a face in them, clear and detailed. Everything darkened but the pulsing globes, until the only life I knew existed in them near the familiar face I saw. I wanted what only their perfection could bring.

The cabin door shut behind me. My dad motioned me over and we went to help my grandpa clean fish. I always had to do the scaling so I grabbed a spoon and started ripping scales off the Sunnies.

Everyone was so silent, I felt I needed to say something; anything but I didn't want to get grandpa started on the gypsies across the lake. The story was delicate, always on the verge of losing its color, its truth, like a flag on a calm day loses everything. I was afraid that he would tell me the truth, that there were no gypsies, only people

like us, even though I had always known. I did not want him taking my illusion away, frightening and dangerous as it was. So I asked for some beer.

"Jesus, what are you teaching this kid," grandpa said. "Well, I guess you can't catch fish if you don't drink a little beer."

It was bitter so I gave it back after a swallow. Then we did talk about fishing. Scales flew while fillets piled in buckets. Mom found me before I had a chance to get all the scales out of my hair. She ushered me to my bunk and soon familiar sounds fell away. I was still awake after the adults invaded their bunks. I watched through the bedroom window as the green summer leaves turned red and orange, reflecting our dying fire. Eventually only thick, steady embers remained. I closed my eyes.

I dreamed about a fire. It grew passed my shoulders, my eyes, and then taller than the flag pole. My uncle ran through it like an animal and chased me into the cabin. The flames caught the walls and I breathed in smoke like dirty silk fingers. The cloth found my lungs and turned to sand. Then, running out, the wet lawn darkened my glowing feet while the cabin burned behind me. At the beach I stopped. I remembered the gypsies across the water who would come to snatch me away.

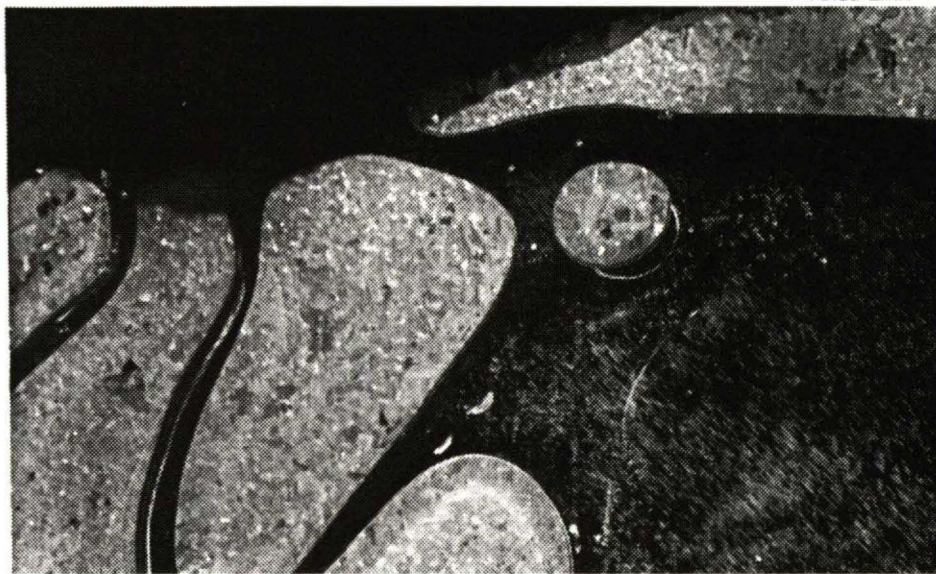
I woke and put my glossy face against the window by my bed. Our fire had gone cool so the trees in the yard were calm and green again. Out the far corner of the glass, a small section of the lake shimmered by a sliver of the moon.

I slipped down from my bunk and passed like a sweaty ghost out to the dock. The lake spread before me like mercury. Seducing fires still burned on the opposite shore and I saw maddened figures dancing in the wicked glow, curling ringed fingers at me.

The fires never died and the lake closed around me like a fist. Most of the night lapped away. I sat staring at the past while the dock stretched out like a great arm, reaching for the crystals across the gypsy water.

Lake Superior Ice

Kristi Link



The Boy in the Birches

Jess Koski

I. The Boy in the Birches

"My dad used to tell us kids how, when he worked in the woods— he was a camp cook too— you know, he would say how a guy stepped into the woods and it turned into night...just like that." Alfred leaned forward and blew out the kerosene lamp. Someone across the table swore quietly and, striking a wooden match, re-lit it.

At sixty-two Alfred was the oldest man at the wooden table which was blanketed in beer cans, cigarette packs, cards, and a cribbage board. The cabin had the feel of a deer hunting shack, the night of opening day— drinking, joke and story telling— the younger men sitting silent while uncles and fathers went through the ritualistic telling. But this wasn't hunting season, it was August. And August was when the checks had come this year. Indians sometimes get checks in the mail, allotment checks, gaming profits, treaty money. It always seemed to come when most needed and least expected. And these men were Indians, some more, some less. Alfred was half, or, as he liked to say "fifty-one percent at allotment time, and fifty-one percent French back in the forties when I'd try to slip into one of those 'No Dogs or Indians' bars in Grand Marais."

"But they keep changing things and then, when the white pine were gone the birch grew up. Mostly it was white birch.. Firewood, pulpwood. A million acres of it. So bright white in the woods back then, a guy felt like one of them buffalo wandering around in a South Dakota blizzard. That's back when we were young."

As he talked he slowly opened and closed his tight hand, flexing the aching muscles and finger joints. The broad back of the hand resembled a map of sorts— brown, criss-crossed with green veins and raised white scars--the result of axe and chain-saw mishaps. Bad hands had finally forced him to the cook shacks of the lumber camps, just like his dad. "No crap! Dad was the original Hungry Jack! They named those pancakes after him, they used to ask'm 'Hungry, Jack?' and he'd always yell back 'Hungry!?'...No one believes that story, but I got a letter around here someplace that'll back me up. Right from them pancake people."

Alfred, of any of the family, at any time, was the most adept at living in both worlds; the world of the Reservation, and that of the city. He would spend months working in the woods, then follow up with a stint in Duluth, First Street, the old bowery district, spending his pay on draft beer, rolling tobacco and one good meal a day, ("that's saved my liver, those other guys on the street, they don't eat and the liver goes to hell").

After a few weeks 'on the street' his absence would motivate a niece or his sister to drive around the avenues and alley-ways until, eventually, he'd be sighted, sitting in the shadows with other dusky men, waiting for something to happen, anything. A strange car would pull up to the curb and Alfred would see a youngish woman lean toward the passenger-side window, and maybe a couple of shabby kids wiping the fog off the glass and pointing excitedly at him— a game of Hide and Seek— except he wasn't hiding, "where were they when I needed a couple of bucks the other day... all I got was their damn dog, barking a trying to get a chunk of my ass!" The car would

inevitably take that familiar, well-worn path to the "De-tox" center. Once they got him sobered up he would pass the days and nights in his tiny hotel room, reading Omar Khayam and old National Geographics, slowly getting his strength back for the day when word would filter down the shore that there was work in some camp up north.

Now, since he'd gone to talk to the doctor at the free-clinic, he didn't have to work anymore. No one at the table knew about the bleeding, the cancer eating away at his gut. He let them think that he had just lost the will to work. And drink. And eat.

"One day me and my brother, Eugene, thought we'd try that old Indian trick, where you run a deer down, on foot. They go in big circles, of course, so you just got to keep after them, keep moving." He stared into the flickering lantern flame and the room had gone quiet. "But we weren't as good as we thought. We were just out here, over the hill, not that far away. But it all went to hell. Me, and Gene, and that doe going around and around in a circle...then I couldn't hear Gene anymore. I walked around the woods yelling for him. It was this time of year and sunny as hell, and the woods were nothing but birch in those days, and as I ran around in those trees I started going snow-blind from those goddam white birch and the sun...nothing looked familiar anymore. I just headed down-hill and finally made it home. Guess that deer had the same idea, they found her at the bottom of that bank out in back of the cabins...broken neck.

But they never found Gene. And I couldn't go back out there until they changed the woods to all poplar...the loggers."

Sunday dawned sunny and bright. Alfred had been awake for a couple of hours and now he slopped out of his low bunk, fully clothed. The big, faded canvas pack on the porch resisted Alfred's tug, but with effort he heaved it to his shoulders. He stepped silently down the wooden steps, not wanting to wake the guys. "I'm not in the mood for stupid questions from a bunch of hung-over dissipates", he thought, proud of having remembered a favorite word from some long forgotten book.

The rocky hill leading up the small hill behind the cabin was wet and slippery with the morning's dew. It was work for him to gain the hilltop, more work than ever, but with a few "breathers" on the way he was soon standing in the full sunlight, on level ground. Looking to the south he could see Lake Superior, shining and blue—a hundred miles to Michigan. To the north he saw only trees. Maybe fifteen miles to the border, really only a small river, then there would be more trees. Hundreds of miles of just trees. The poplar would give way to the spruce and balsam which in turn became scarce and scrubby up near the tree line. He thought back to the National Geographics...musk oxen, white wolves, ptarmigan...

North was the direction he was going, and with his shadow leading the way he followed the game paths, stopping only once, at the edge of a small grove of white birch a short distance ahead. He shed the pack, opened it, and pulled out several of the contents—a small rack of deer antlers from last fall's hunt, an old wool shirt, a battered reed creel, a book... and he carefully tossed each item, as if he were throwing horseshoes, into a pile of other, similar things at the base of an ancient dying birch. Faded, red strips of cloth fluttered from some of the higher-up branches, fifty years

out of reach. Squatting, he let his aching hands rest on the sun-warmed backpack and began his annual, and somewhat self-conscious monologue. "Hey, Gene, not much new this year I guess. Work some, spend some time with the boys... Ma died you know... or was that last year? I'm supposed to be in Duluth tomorrow, for surgery, but I ain't going. Going for a walk instead."

A slight taste of blood on his otherwise dry tongue, and the sharpening stab of pain in his stomach reminded him that this year's visit to the old birch was his last, merely a stop-over to say "so-long" to Gene. "More like B'jo", he thought, remembering the Ojibwe word for hello, and goodbye.

Alfred groaned as he stood, the lightened pack in hand. He pulled a pair of old Ray-Bans from his shirt pocket and started to put them on, but half-way to his dark face he pulled them back and folded them carefully in his palm. Stepping over to the pile of rusting and rotting debris he set the sunglasses gently on top, cradled in the hollow of some moose antler. As he stepped away, north-- toward the stream that divided two countries and toward... a glossy, dated photo of musk oxen...he turned his head toward the mound that had come to represent his brother, nodded, and said, "Maybe I'll run into you... And if I do I'll show you this old Indian trick for catching northerns up in the Pigeon River. No poles. You out-swim them."

II. Barriers

"Piggly Wiggly pigglywiggly pigglywigglypigglywigglypigglywiggly".

By shifting to his side and pressing the button which raised the head of the hospital style bed, Alfred could avoid looking at his "luggage"-- a grocery bag with the inane, grinning face of a red pig-- and could just see the lake through the small window of the nursing home wall.

He watched the waves roll up the sandy beach from the northeast. From the top of Lake Superior, sweeping around and past the Susie Islands of Grand Portage, hammering at a hundred and fifty miles of the North Shore until here, Duluth... a little spit of sand... an unlikely barrier to the advance of this battering body of water.

He felt the barriers around him getting more real. Barriers which seemed to take the shape of questions. Why hadn't he been able to cross that border "creek"? Why had they taken him from the woods, from the old birch, when he was so close to a release from the pain and hunger and aloneness? Why did he no longer understand these white people around him, now that he no longer felt a need for them? Would his end come as a crashing of waves over sand-- like a slowing pulse?

As always, the asking of these questions resulted in a swell of pain in his guts. He reached out for the button, at the side of the bed, which brought a nurse and an end, temporarily, to the pain and the questions.

"Wigglywigglypig Pigpigpig pig in a wig. HEY! PIG! You and me, we should go on a vision quest together! Do it the old fashioned way, no food, no water, you know... work for it... HAAAAHA! Yeah, I could use some spiritual guidance and you! you goddam lard-ass, you could stand to lose a couple pounds! Hard on the old tick-

er, all that fat. And look at that face of yours... beetfuckinred... blood pressure sky high...".

Alfred Stone shut his eyes slowly and softly. The absence of sight intensified sound, and he felt the window dissolve, back to silica and water. He felt the breeze increase and cool his hot face. He smelled the fishy, ozone of the white-caps. He felt the numbing cold of the water climb up his ankles and shins. He felt the rough, splinters of the gunwales in his grip. And he felt the gentle rolling of the canoe as he settled in and Gene handed him the paddle

Chris Peterson



Papa Albert

Jennifer Todd

Albert should've been a sailor. Not a captain, but a sailor. He listens well. He also has a mind for calculations. It comes from keeping track of the stock-market for years and listening to Bette Sweet. She's the talker. He's the listener. His skin is dark and pure, like fine chocolate kisses - his favorite candy. Maybe not so dark. Coarse strands of pure white hair cover his head. He wears it back in a ponytail most of the time, especially when he's out in public. Sometimes, at home, it falls around him, ruffled, as if the winds of some sea have been at it for a long time.

Today he is not sorting golf balls, walking, checking the stocks, playing poker, or golfing. He is trying to write. He asks me what my dad wants for his birthday as I return from the beach.

"Dad would really like a letter, Papa."

He's been trying for two hours already.

His feet are stretched on the black leather footrest. A golf tournament is on TV. As I look at him, his ears seem like huge instruments vibrating in anticipation of a coming concert. He has the Todd ears - they're big. As each golfer's name is announced, his ears perch patiently, awaiting the information. His hair is back in the usual ponytail, and I find it comical to see him so serious. It makes me laugh.

Startled, he returns his eyes to the blank piece of paper in front of him. Gazing furiously at the page, his eyes are the exact color of sunlight reflecting off slabs of crashed ice along the shores of Superior.

Grandmama stops by.

"No golfing today, Albie?"

"No."

"Anything wrong?"

"Nope."

She shrugs her shoulders, grins at me, and walks out to the porch.

I look back at Albert. His fingers are clenched firmly around the pencil. I see him now, a sailor, holding the sheet of a Great Lakes sailboat, his grip hard and strong.

I try to console him, "God, it's hard to write!"

His ice-blue eyes turn and lock to mine. I won't say another word.

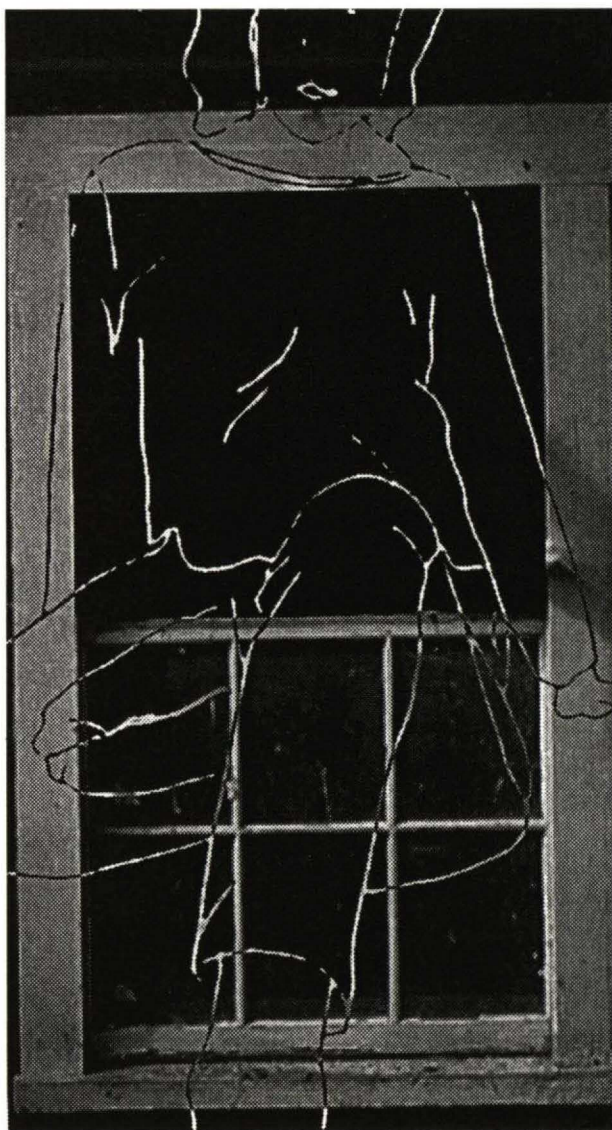
Suddenly, he grasps his ponytail holder and pulls the hair out of it roughly. His ears tune in to the winds of creativity and he becomes a rebel, inspired by the waters of his mind. He bends and scratches at the pages - the TV is drowned out by the scribbling noise. After this explosion of energy, his chapped fingers ease their grip and subside as he dozes off into a restless sleep. His head tilts back into the easy-chair. Occasionally, his ears perk up and the toes wrestle in his shoes, in response to his deep snores. He looks like he's had a rough time.

There is a wrinkled and worn piece of paper filled mostly with geometric designs. At the bottom are these words, "Happy Birthday Greg. What I have to say, I can't seem to write or speak. I love you. Dad."

It took Papa three hours to write these words. They are the only ones he's ever written.

Waiting by the window

Kris Huber

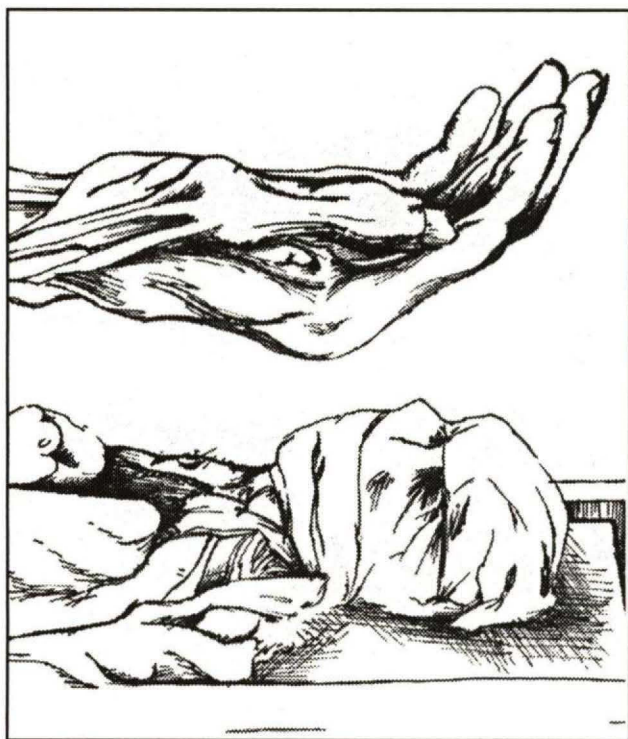


Snow White by the Sea

Lance Molis

I strolled down by the sea in the early hours of morning, for then is the time before the sun when all things are still and quiet, resting in the mildew of the night's cool breath, the sand is not yet hot to the touch, but wet and cool, all things are sleeping, waiting for Him to wake them, before me, spread out upon her bed, the beach stretches in the soft morning, at her side the waves lick gently, tugging at her to come and bathe, pulling her frosty hair in its foam, she stirs and follows the retreating wake, and in the brine is renewed and deposited upon her bed again, and in east mannerly knocking announces the gentleman caller, with the modesty of morning she pulls the sheet of water about her body and turns her sandy complexion to meet with closed lids the sun's gentle kiss, such is the way the shore is woke by the day.

Tim Anderson



Fishing in the light of an overcast day,
the clouds fold in to shroud out the sun which has now risen
to its' full height, and will do nothing but sink for the remains
of the day,
the sky seems very full, an apple tree whose limbs are bending,
snapping, and bleeding as the murderous apples strain fat like
ticks in its woody skin, sucking their growth from their host
through thirsty stems, living, hungry stems that chew deep into
the giver tree,
this is a full sky, cluttered with energy potential, it sags
its cloud belly so full of water that it seems inevitable a
fat cloud gut will scrape some tall tree top, and then open
a rift that will bleed the sky dry,
at my feet the ground tosses and heaves upward, it strains to
listen for a rumble, or a flash, it is a crispy, dry ground,
the grass I walk upon turns to dust and pollen-like blows away,
eager apple it is that waits for rain this day,
the sun-burned earth quivers and twitches with anticipation
of the coming moisture,
hoppers and beetles run like men confused among the grass blades
as if they are examining the new wind sweeping through their
world,
I rise from my haunches to stand erect on my hind legs, a small
movement, but enough of one to consume Darwin's life,
I try to test the air with my nose to smell the rain, man can
still smell it faintly, but I think it a poor payment that we
lost our nose just to stand straighter,
how rich they must smell, would I were a beast so I could suck the
perfume of tardy rain, tickling nostrils like a wet feather,
the smell of melting snow, damp socks drying and steaming over
a warm fire, of reeds bobbing in the swampy, duckweed coated
waves, of soup broth, of burning ice, of rolling in dewy grass,
of wet dog shaking and shivering off droplets upon your pant
leg, of berries grown, of berries eaten, the juices running
down your chin staining your face murder red, of swimming bare
in a cold river after a tooth-gritty ride in the sun, the cold,
cleansing baptism scraping away the soiled parts of your soul,
of rusty well water, of laundry hung outdoors to dry, of salty
tears, of salty blood, of salty sweat, of cool trout streams
counting down and backward, washing away the ages of great men

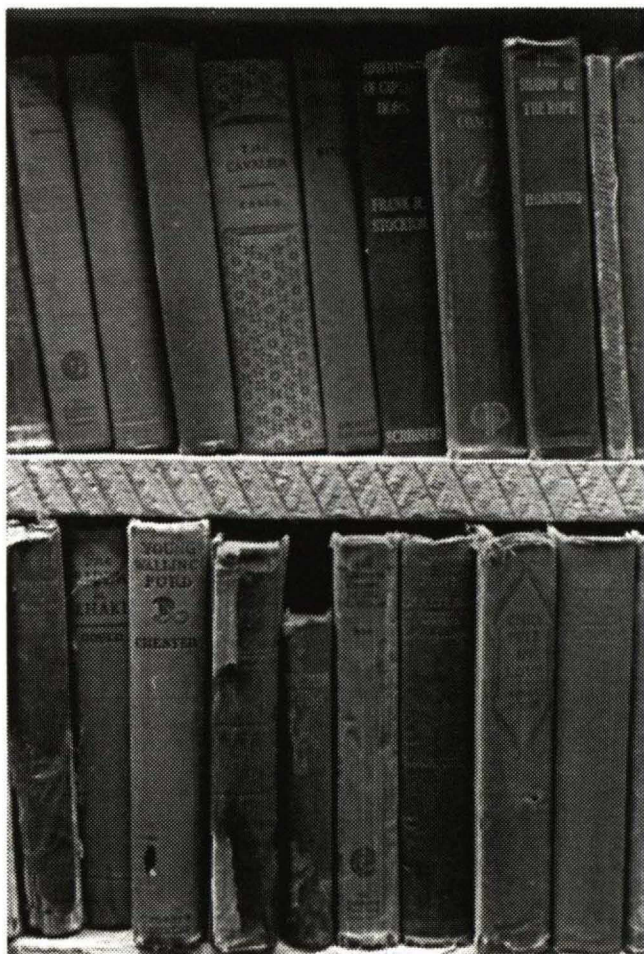
'til reaching the time when men were not, and then losing count,
and then losing time, and all is silence, of the blue brine
that is the sea where memory fades, and water pays us no mind,
of all this is comprised the scent of rain clouds,

I too am eager for it to fall, the dust hangs thick, polluting,
vile in the air, to breathe is like sucking on a wad of cotton,
the hiss and swish of my fly-line is now the only sound, for
the chorus of crickets has paused from its caroling to bend,
and strain, and wait on edge,

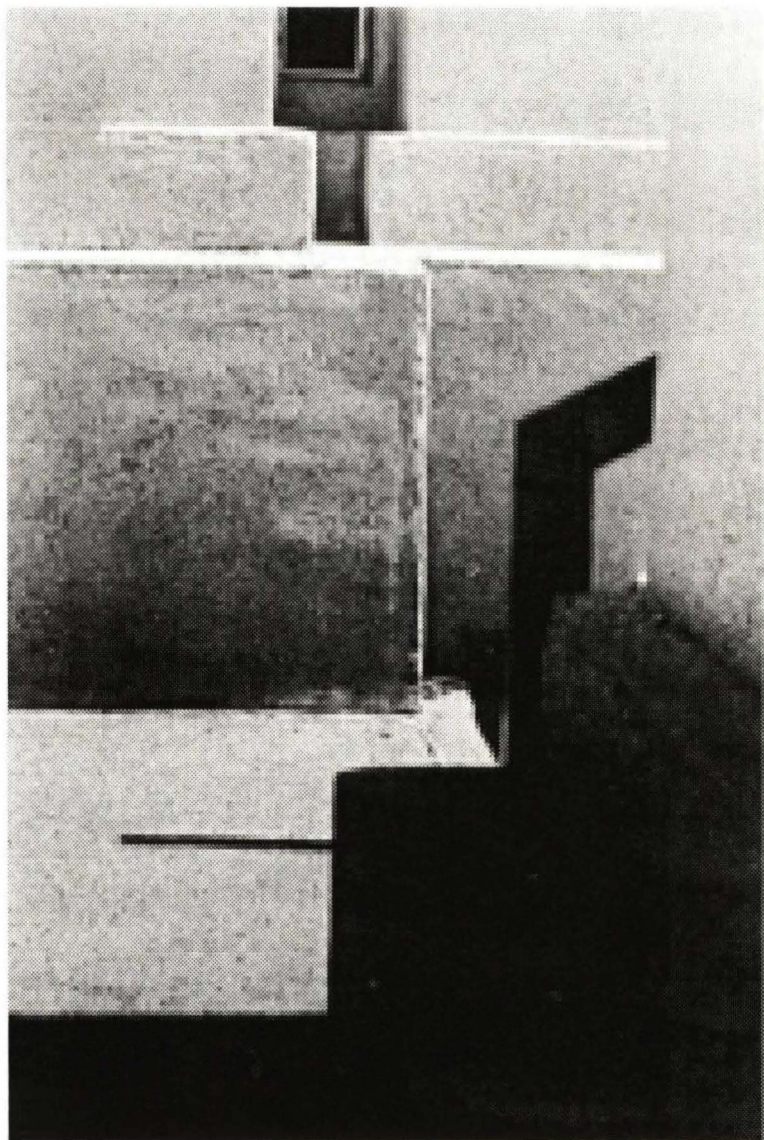
I can picture them pacing like an expectant father, nervous
and consumed with an invisible cloud of worries matched only
by the visible cloud of foggy cigar smoke which chimney-like
spews out to hang about his head, a frame to hold his hopes,
the fly-line swishes past my head from ten to two then beyond,
and out upon the water to sit in a stagnant inlet of the stream
that whispers before my feet, soft whisperings that seem to
set my mind in a trance, in the stillness of a trance whispers
become words which are nothing short of wisdom, and if I'm lucky
I can take a piece of that wisdom with me when I leave, I focus on the fly,
twitching it, and tugging it, I cause the dry-fly to have life there where it
seems a wounded bug imprisoned, pathetic, sad, desperate, dying upon the
smooth, still binding stream, little struggling dry-fly, a dance as old as
water and insect, yet never did the theater capture such grace on stage as
is found in the swish of a fly upon predatory waters, waters haunted by
dark shapes laying beneath the rim of two worlds, hungry, lurking, patient
shadows, wiser than any philosopher, and more agile than any dancer, this is
the world of brooks, and bows, and browns, the little bodies containing
great hearts as small rooms trap mighty men, their hearts like men
imprisoned beat the walls of their cell fiercely, turning fish into flash
into wake into gone, the line burning my hand, the pain-blinding
excitement, this religion, this beauty, this is the time God does not
deduct, the once still stream is a shower of activity as water parts in the
trout's wake, the fray, and spray, and I standing waist deep, and lunging farther out,
and almost out of line, trying to slow his run, but not break
our tie, the fever pitched in that moment, eyes flashing wide, limbs
trembling, movements of awkward man in ritual classic, the moment when
my fingers slide within his gills, and hold fast the slick, kicking fish, the
dance ends, the spray falls back on itself, and descends to ripples that
shake, and dissipate, moving outward, away from the center, quivering
rings slowly calm, the stream becomes silence, silence holds the flashing
figures, one covered with nature's sleek coating, the other a beacon, a
lighthouse calling home emotions that he cannot name,
I take him in hand, and hold him above his world, his energy has gone,

drained by the spasms of his fight, I lay him in the basket at my hip, and close the lid, crouching now I realize from dizziness that I have forgotten to breathe, I take my first breath, and take my breathing slowly, there are rumbles in the clouds now, echoes of the battle taken place on this stage below them, soon the rain will fall, I shall stay and let it soak me through, I am hungry for it to be in contact with me, until then I sit in silent contemplation, the stream flows by forgetting all that has happened here today, the water we danced in has flown by and left us, renewed by incoming water it pushes on to lakes, oceans, and clouds, perhaps the rain that will fall today has been in this stream before, when raindrops come home to roost they stay but a short while, and then are lost to the multitudes . . .

Sara Gerard



Stuart Mullenberg



Liv is pale and birdlike. She has long fingers that narrow to too-short nails. Everything about her on the outside is thin and young and seemingly frail. I suppose that counters the old-man-soul and the tangled-up mess of emotional spaghetti inside of her. She had a raucous laugh that surprises me every time she lets it out. A lot of the stuff that comes from her insides surprises me.

I heard a bit of dialogue in a song lyric once that explains Liv's relationship with the world. The first voice in the song said something like, "A strong wind could blow you down." The second voice countered, "A strong wind could take me away."

Speaking of wind, Liv is like one of those cold breezes that sneaks in your shirt sleeve, and makes your nipples hard, and then disappears, leaving you a little more aware of the stuff that is going on outside your head. The fact that my experiences with her aren't always satisfying (usually just the opposite) doesn't stop me from vying for her like a cigarette in a movie theater or a warm body to tangle up in at night.

If you really look at her, all the emotional shit racked up from the thousand years of living she has crammed into her eighteen on this planet, is visible. Liv is articulate, and sometimes she lets out bits of her inside, in subtle, but intense ways. I want to be with her, just in case she does that today.

She does have some idea about how I feel, and we're in that state of flux that happens before you decide if you want to take things further. It is risky business. For her, because of reasons I'm not sure of yet, and for me because I am afraid of enveloping myself in her and realizing that she's not as big as I thought she was.

Plus, she has somebody in love with her back in the last town she fell into. They had something intense, but, true to her nature, one day, four months ago, Liv decided to move on, and within a week was living two states away from everyone who loved her. Lucky for me, God or Fate or Greyhound decided to drop her off here.

Two weeks ago we got into this splendidly sticky, veiled conversation about our relationship. The problem is that neither of us is ready just yet to be bold. My only worry is that she might blow outta here before I get the balls to tell her precisely what I've been thinking.

She hugged me tightly for a moment too long. As we moved apart, Liv smoothed my hair because our embrace created static electricity that made it fly away and cling to her shirtsleeve.

"Hi," she smiled.

I shoved the orange wildflowers in her face and immediately regretted the gesture with every nerve. She smiled, reddened, and recovered--all in about seven seconds.

"God, thanks," she managed.

I have always hated the nice things that embarrass me. The word "mistake" blinked on and off furiously in my head, but I fumbled on.

"I was thinking of you when I rode the bus home this afternoon, so I rode up a couple more stops and picked these out for you." I felt apprehension leak out

through my words.

"It's okay. They're great. They're me. Really." She leaned over and kissed my forehead. "Want some wine?"

Liv rinsed out a juice glass and set both the jug of wine and the glass in front of me, gesturing for me to help myself. Meanwhile she searched for a vase or something. She couldn't find anything that would work, so she stepped out onto the porch and returned with six empty beer bottles from the recycling bin.

"Re-use," she pointed out as she slipped a flower into each bottle and placed them in different places around the apartment.

She came back to the couch and stretched out with her head in my lap. "You're in a white room. No doors. No windows. What are you doing?"

"Am I trying to get out?" I wondered out loud.

"No questions. What would you do?"

"Can anyone hear me?"

"No. No more questions."

"I don't know. Are you sure no one could hear me?"

"Yes, already," she sighed.

"I guess I would sing. What would you do?"

"Masturbate."

"Oh."

"The room is supposed to signify death."

"You'd really masturbate?"

"Yes," she smirked.

"How do you know when you love somebody?"

"Don't think I don't know you just changed the subject."

"Yeah, so?"

"Okay. I picture their death and me speaking at their funeral. If it makes me feel lump-in-the-throat sad, then I know-- What? Why are you making that face? How would you know?"

"I just know," I tried to explain. "No. I guess I'm not sure. I've been wrong before. Hard to say." She looked hard into my eyes for a second, so I shut them. I was not ready for her to see inside yet.

Conversations like that happen all the time with Liv. She's always got something up her sleeve or behind her ear.

* * *

"So what did you want to talk about?" I ask.

Liv called me this morning at 7:30 and awakened me from a marvelous dream where she and I were on the road, traveling together and being happy. She asked me to come over, saying she had something to tell me. Finally, we were going to be straight with one another about all this.

She folds herself up on the kitchen counter and beats a quiet rhythm with her fingers on the edge of the sink. She's always singing or tapping out a rhythm on something. Letting it all out. I have always kept it all in.

Liv reads my thoughts. "Where are you right now?"

"Someplace besides here."

"Well, come back. I've got news."

"Good or bad?"

"Good, I think. Good for me. I hope. You're the first person I'm telling."

"Well?"

"I'm moving back home for awhile. There's really nothing here for me anymore."

"Nothing" bulletholes me, ricocheting and echoing inside of me so hard I can't breathe for a second. I try to tell her how much it hurts, but the words don't come. Liv moves toward me. We hug in that endearing and tender way of women, but my heart is somewhere far away already. I am telling myself, "I told you so." Liv puts her mouth on my neck and whispers into my skin. "Are you all right?"

"You smell like Indonesia and Guatemala and all those spicy places." It is all I can think to say.

"Thanks. I think."

We stand, holding each other in silence while the echoes of her words thread through every part of me and make me unravel.

Then, finally, the words come. "I know you were going to fly out of here without much ado someday, but nothing was a little less than even I expected. Every moment I spend with you, I come closer to telling you that I never want you to leave, but I never do. I never tell you how much I love when you scrunch up your nose and shake your head in disagreement with the taste of the words you sometimes have to eat during our conversations. I never tell you that you are the only person I think about. It always seems out of context to tell you that you are breathtaking. It also seems a little off any subject we've ever discussed to bring up the fact that I dream about us pulling a Thelma and Louise, so that when you go, you won't go alone. And here you are. Leaving. Without me."

Liv pulls completely away from me and looks me straight in the eyes. This time I don't turn away.

"I'm sorry." She slides down to the floor and puts her head on her knees. She reaches for my hands as I sit down facing her. "I have to go."

By the way she says it, I know this is good-bye. I move closer to her and hold her while she cries for the last five places she drifted out of and for all those people she left behind who never said what I just did. It starts out softly, and builds up to noisy, shaking sobs. I push her hair from her face and hum softly into her temple until she's finished digging up all that stuff buried in the pockets of her soul.

She looks up at me and sighs unevenly with the aftershocks of a good, hard cry. "I'd cry at your funeral." We both half-smile.

"I'd cry at yours, too."

* * *

Three days later, Liv is on her way back to another place that probably cannot contain her. Like I said before, she breezes in and breezes out, touching those she breezes past in a way that most people don't forget. I won't forget, even if I try.

I have heard all my life, "History repeats itself." I have perceived this cliché to mean the history of mankind, the great occurrences... the wars which have decided the fates of millions of people and countless civilizations... the great tragedies caused by nature: earthquakes, flood, and drought. Today I can see what has been seen since the beginning of life. It is a simple history which repeats itself daily. It even happens in the middle of the turmoil caused by the more notable historical events. It is the birth of a grandfather... The moments when a man first greets his grandson into the world.

I sit and I look at the two of them. My father who is now 57 holding such a new tiny life. He sits with the new infant in his arms. He was now a grandfather. The tiny infant held within the super structure, which is my father.

The child so new to the world with his hard flat belly pressed against my father's full roundness. My father's hand spread wide, to allow the baby's diminutive fingers an attempt at encompassing his immense pinky finger. I look on with amazement.

As I appraise the two of them, they seem to peer with wonder at one another. The baby with his fresh new round face, examining the face that has been influenced by many years of living. He explores father's face with his new eyes, so new the whites look blue. The blue of a new fallen snow. I wonder, what does he see as he looks at my father?

The clear white hair, one for each snowfall he has seen. The furrowed forehead. The lines remain even when my father isn't worrying these days. My father's eyebrows like bushy cat's eye-whiskers. I guess he has learned when he is in too tight of a spot. Now I see how his eyelids hang over his eyes. Is that droop caused from all the nights he stayed up waiting for my date who was bringing me home? The color of his eyes a faded gray, brushed with blue, with eye lashes barely visible in their grayness. The lines around his eyes crinkled with all the laughter he has enjoyed. His cheeks and nose elongated with the pull of time.

He laughs now, in response to the gurgling sound my son makes. With his free hand he caresses the soft down-like hair. Hair which is not much longer than the fuzz on a peach and about the same color. The soft smooth forehead of the baby untouched by troubles as yet. His eyebrows lie flat. He has not as yet found when he is in too tight of a spot. His face is still a little puffy from the delivery. His eyelids and cheeks full, round, and smooth. His eyes so new from the womb are as blue as midnight. My new son's nose so small and taut, he hasn't put it anywhere he wasn't supposed to yet. His lips are full and smooth. Not yet touched by a frown. His neck so thin and long, unable to even support his own head.

I look at the two of them and can see the future. As this child grows he will have tears and joys. They will match my father's. One day my child will have the strength to support vast loads on what are now tiny shoulders. He will develop into the solid man who is so like my father, my husband. Who in his turn will be the grandfather holding the new baby.

The Roaring Muse is seeking submissions for the Summer issue.

Poetry, Prose, Photography, and Illustrations are welcomed. If possible submit literature on a Macintosh compatible disk and remember, artwork must be of a scannable size (11" X 14" max.)

Submissions can always be dropped off at the English Dept. office. Or, you can mail you can mail your submissions to:

**UMD English Dept.
Attn: Jake
410 Humanities Building
10 University Drive
Duluth, MN 55812**

Artwork will be available for return upon request. The Summer Edition is to be distributed on campus the first two weeks of the Fall '97 quarter. Deadline for Submissions will be

Friday, August 1st, 1997

The Roaring Muse would like to thank the following for their funding and support:

The UMD English Department.
The Student Association
The UMD Literary Guild
Office Max (for their generous assistance in the printing of the first issue).
Sivertson Gallery
The businesses who have advertised.
Everyone who helped out on the Publications Committee.
The Writers and Artists who have submitted the material.
Linda and Doug at the Darland Print Shop

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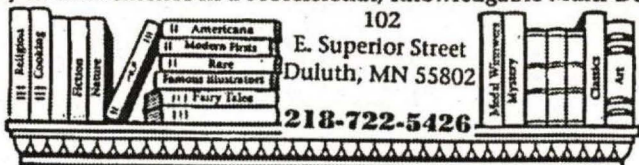
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