NORTHRIDGE REVIEW

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FALL 1988

Northridge Review invites submissions between September and May. Manuscripts should be accompanied by a cover page that includes the author's name, address and telephone number, as well as the titles of the works submitted. *The author's name should not appear on the manuscript itself.* Manuscripts and all other correspondence should be sent to: *Northridge Review*, Department of English, California State University, Northridge, CA 91330. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

With grateful acknowledgment to the Associated Students of CSUN and the English Department faculty and staff.

And in recognition of the contributions of Maria Hayes at Delta Lithograph Company.

Awards

Two awards are given annually by *Northridge Review* in recognition of exceptional writing. **The Rachel Serwood Poetry Award,** given in memoriam of Rachel Sherwood, recognizes the best poem published by *Northridge Review*. The winner receives fifty dollars from the University and will be acknowledged alongside the name of Rachel Sherwood. **The Helen Helms Marcus Award,** established by Helen Marcus, is given in recognition of the best short story published by a CSUN student. The winner of this award receives two hundred dollars.

Northridge Review proudly recognizes the following award winners:
Rachel Sherwood Poetry Award: Mary M. Harris, for her poem, "Sestina for a Son"
Helen Helms Marcus Award: Mona Houghton, for her story, "Trapped in the Heart"
Both works are printed in this issue of *Northridge Reveiw*.

The American Academy of Poets Award: *Northridge Review* proudly presents the winning poems of the annual award given by the Amerian Academy of Poets. The poems in this issue are Herman Fong's "Passing Away" and "Far Away, to My Friend."

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Herman Fong

Passing Away

We come each spring to this deserted field
where headstones reach up
like pale tongues tasting the living air.
The names chipped out on cracking marble
are unknown to me,
and you only half remember,
but still we trek through congested streets,
half the afternoon gone,
and walk into the windy valley
to lay a square of antique cloth
on thinning grass
and to set for ancestors
a simple meal of boiled duck,
bits of fatty pork,
and round lotus seed cakes
sprinkled with sesame seeds roasted brown.
After prayers and bowing,
whiskey and wine,
warmed in porcelain teacups by the sun,
are thrown down and soaked into the earth.
Bamboo chopsticks are laid on end in pairs,
and slender red candles shaped like cattails
are lit for good fortune
along with orange stacks of crisp hell money,
thousands of sheets burned to ashes
which lift to the sky with an April breeze.
We leave the flames burning,

the meat and cakes glistening in their oils
as we go and look
for other gravestones rows away,
and when we return,
we must chase off a cemetery dog
that has stolen the largest piece of grey fat.
We are the last in a line
to carry on this ceremony.
I do not believe, as you do,
that it does the dead some good,
but I wish that I could.
Then, I would go on kneeling and rising,
holding bundles of incense
by bowls of tangerines and sprays of kumquats,
but I could probably count the years left
on just my hands.

Miles Away, To My Friend

The blue summer you journeyed down
and I traveled north,
two days each,
to Pengyou River
to pitch tents to the sound
of rippling waves on rock
stays with me.

In firelight, after roast fish,
we heard strings plucked in the distance,
and we drank plum wine
and sang slowly of Xiwang village
and its sinewy trees
heavy with birds and spring blossoms,
where we ate and slept and opened books.

In the morning, as bright water geese

flew with August clouds,
we parted like two leaves
yellow and weighted with dew
falling from the same bough
and returned across valleys and ranges
to our desolate cities.

Our time those months ago
makes the winter frost cling longer
to the leafless branches
outside my window.

Margaret Ritchie

the geologist and me

the map is on the dashboard
and i am searching for landmarks
though i have never been here before.
we are looking for fossils;
i told you about this place
and you related the mountain
is really one big rock underneath
which evidence of ancient life
is documented.

and driving now beneath chinks
and crevices we are sheltered only momentarily
by overhanging granitic shelves or trees
conforming upright to the steep topography.
and we swing carefully on the edges
of curve and curves. i am certain
we are proof enough of life
where we are so alone.

and if we take anything home with us
you will call it evidence. i know rocks
and you know them yet, our faces and bands
powdered with dust you
will display them polished and labeled.
i leave them behind like a map, unused,

out of a certain fondness i have
for memory. let me

remember this;
i would find this place
if i cared to.

Not Just You and Me

If I need inspiration
I could look
to the whale we saw
and the big fat island
out there
where the seals swim.
But that is where
I discovered suns,
magnetic,
that fall strange
behind thin clouds
strung like sly weeds
across the water.
Yes, there was something
I needed there,
like a box of old books,
or a sewing needle;
I could have used that moment
to mend our leaking boat,
or taken a line
from the look on your face
and pressed it
like a keepsake
between the pages.
But driving down the road now

the desert is asleep,
the night empty and large
as a bowl. And if
in my thoughts
I weave
inspiration
I pull it
over my head
roll down the sleeves
and curl into
the night, the black sky
wooly and wide
enough for us all.

On the Porch with My Daughter

I think about Susan
her large calloused feet
like leather boots.
There
she swings slightly
to the radio,
her face speckled
with the lazy sun,
her weight
bending trees.
Now she appears
in her cotton dress
to ask me something,
her blonde hair soft
her tonque pink
as a baby's palm.
Then the cat, stalking
behind her, looking for someone

to feed it, the kitten
whose first rememberance
of warmth was a plastic dish,
who never really learned
to clean herself until once, she bled.
I took her tiny claws,
trimmed them one by one,
down to the pink.

Carol M. Spizman

Women of Healthy Stock

It is the unfortunate curve of hip
moon-like roundness, radiant arc of thigh
shape for which my grandmother paid
dearly attracting men like locusts in Poland
taking the crops. They took
her bloom for years now spent, now skinny
in indulgence of their flat, gray hands.
And me, same glowing limbs, same
solid curve, it's not unwillingly
but sadly we come to expect a thresher
come claiming only to harvest
only to stop the gorgeous curve of enough,
of plenty, of you who are too beautiful
to be allowed to stay that way.

Chaney Holland

Alain Cavalier's *Therese*

This morning I fell asleep at mass again. Mother
punished me. Sister Luke says be patient, the first
thirty years at Carmel are the hardest, but I never
wanted to live here. Until you came. My cheek creased
against the chilly vestry floor, the rustling of habits
as each sister carefully stepped over me. Hateful
obeisance. Already they've seen the wildflowers I left
on your cot, the welts I raised on my body bared and
shamed for its need. Then like the disguise, the mirage
of morphine, you deflect my love back onto me. No,
don't ask me to stop. They mean to keep us from one
another. Through the hours of wringing sheets, ironing,
washing, prayers like gutted fish, I chafed and you
obeyed. You cried for joy at your wedding, even the
eventual lost faith well-defined, the grating path of
the crucifix dragged across the stone floor. Like a
collapsed lung I never had any to begin with. Saved
tears, locks of shorn hair, fingernails, save the little
we are allowed, what endures. One day a sailor brought
seaweed, we cradled a wooden child in our arms and
Celine costumed you, the youngest, as Joan of Arc. It
was Mary's Day and the light in your blushing face
nearly killed me. You dropped sword and flag, fell, the
camera flashed, blood gushing from your mouth. We could
not lift you, we who loved you most. The grim, scourged
mouth of our Mother, the Martin sisters enfolding their
flesh, their death. Pauline, Marie, Celine and Therese.

Aster, fleur-de-lis, primrose and illuminated rose, the flowering of such care. Whoever showed my barren jealousy such tenderness? In the wavering months left, I wept when I heard your faint cries as though under glass—God, the father, my husband I beseech you, enter my garden, come into your orchard and receive your fruits. The silent silence answered for the vision that comes from looking directly at the sun. For you I imagined Egypt, a burning sky, the natives shrieking below two radiant nuns perched on the hump of a spitting camel. Therese, your death has released me, I have escaped in my wedding dress, with silver in my shoe. Walk for me. I have divorced Jesus, I have traded a violin for a train ticket to Paris. Walk for me, plain Lucy now. I am seeking the Egypt of mystery, and my secret sorrow, the rosary of your blood and saliva.

Patti Scheibel

Submersion

There is green peaceful water
With fish drifting in and out
Under the cover of anonymity.

Dive in with me
So deep and dirty no one can see.

There are places where creatures with eyes
Bugged out and paler than white
Hide,
Where no voices can be heard.

Dive in with me
Let me wrap you in a watery body
And breathe away your boundaries
Until everything is fluid and giving.

There is a death like rain,
Redemption without pain,
Thornless and soft,
Reasonless,
A passion too dark to be seen,
Too gentle for the air.

Meat

"Eat your meat," they say.
It lies dead on my plate,
Gray on the outside,
Pink on the inside,
Marbled with strings of white fat.
"Eat your meat so you'll grow up to be big and strong."
It's moist,
That's the worst.
When you chew and chew it remains in a lump
Until finally you swallow it whole
Because you can't stand the feel of it in your mouth.
You can never eat enough.
There is always more
on the red strawberry platter in the center of the table.
"In this house no one goes hungry," they say.
You linger over your carrots and milk.
They at least seem friendly and bright
While on either side of you the adults
Gnaw at the bones,
Watching you,
Sharp eyed.
You are within their hands' reach
And they are huge from years of eating meat.

James Leishman Etchison

Electrolux 1500

The babies cried,
The salesman (apologized,)
Momma rubbed her circle eyes,
And Daddy grabbed the paddle
When I, the only son
Took the new green machine
Outside,
And sucked down the clouds,
Sucked down the Moon.

J. Jivey

Modern Bat Girl

saturday night in my apartment
i
count the change in the yellow
plastic dog food bowl that
sits next to the
William Carlos Williams
Selected Poems book on the dresser.
i have seven dollars and twenty-eight cents so i
walk to the liquor store and buy a half pint of
Popov vodka. Two dollars and twenty-six cents left.
later, i will go to "Z Club" and dance
to old Bowie and old Stones.

1:48 a.m.—i
hop on my red scooter and
take off down Melrose, leave
the pavement and fly
like a modern Bat Girl.
i drink straight from the bottle and
take care to stay clear of the
helicopter police.

up in the sky i
see all of Hollywood—i see you
in the dairy section at the Safeway on 3rd and
i swoop down to say, 'hi—
do you shop here often?'

half nude boys with tattoos of Jesus and
roses all over their backs
throw eggs at me as i reach
for Pop n' Fresh dough. i speed
out the in door and i hear you
scream, 'but i love you girl on the flying red scooter....'

i float up high for a while, bliss,
yes, absolute bliss. i have waited weeks
to hear those words—but wait—my
teeth start to chip—crack and shred—like thin reeds of
bamboo they fall apart in my mouth. A front tooth gets
long—so long i can't even bite down.

i wonder what i could have eaten to
cause so much damage...i figure
it must have been swallowing what you said
back at the supermarket....

anyway, i make it to the club—it costs five dollars and
i don't have enough to go in so
i stand outside the door—i twirl hard, movin' it doin' it,
bad teeth and all.

Bobbie R. Coleman

Life Science, Tenth Grade

Smelling of Brylcreem and Pennzoil
he passes me a note,
Will you go steady with me? yes/no
I'm to mark the proper box.
I sit near the cabinet,
in flat-chested Mrs. Nathan's
life science class,
where she keeps the jars
of pickled guts, neatly lined and labeled,
like the fruits and vegetables
our neighbor cans each spring:
human gall bladders, brains, eyeballs,
a four-month male fetus, stored
in glass and formaldehyde.
They say somewhere in back
are her tits, lopped off and preserved
for the sake of science.
He gropes me under the table
I move away, not wanting my heart
displayed in a Mason jar.

Adria Hirsch

Tuesdays for Zuma

I want to go back
to when a fast cool wind
swept over our
sunburnt, sea salt
legs dangling
like a lazy dog's tongue
out of the back window
of your mom's stationwagon.

Another Tuesday in
a green ship
winding down Kanan Canyon
to stop at the fruit and
nut stand,
roll our tongues
like waves
over sweet grapes
and munch peanuts
with the shells still on.

I have been feeling
more like the
sandcrabs that would
wriggle over our knuckles,
our cartwheels—
footprints to handprints
that went out with
the fading whitewash.

Marlene Pearson

A Fine Day for a Middle-Class Marriage

"Put your arms on, Venus, or people
will wonder about your life."
—overheard at a museum

he told her its a fine day, put on your red dress
she said I cannot swallow oysters
when you keep burning my skin with matches

he said I bought us a house by the ocean
she said all the children out there are drowning

he said show the doctor where it hurts
she reached for the globe

he said lets have a baby. I need the deduction
she said I need to spit out the sour taste in my mouth

she coughed and out came the dead sea
he handed her a napkin and built a resort

he said put flowers on the table and comb your hair
she said the seaweed will not stop screaming

he struck a match, lit the candles
and said hurry up, you're late for dinner
she walked into the sea

the salty jaw would not swallow her
she said I am too heavy and cut off an arm

he said you need a hobby. collect rocks
she swallowed all she could
until she could not move

he bought a museum
put her in a glass case behind a velvet cord
and sold tickets

Eloise Klein Healy

We Are Not Married In A House Together

Here's the clock and here's the table
and here's your daughter with a blond
streak running like a sidewalk
from one ear to the other.

We are not married, we are not in a house together,
she is not my family.

Here's the table you can watch your feet through
and here's the wonderful clock
that has never in my experience worked
and here's the sidewalk through the hanging baskets
where your daughter left her fast tracks
the night she ran away.

We are not married, we are not living
together in a house, she is not my child.

Here is your daughter, little blond
smile that sometimes works and sometimes
just keeps time. She and I sit at the table
and your worry is that she will mock me
and my worry is that we will live
in a house together. I expect to be mocked.
We are not married. I come and go along
the sidewalk. You come and go up and down
my stairs. She can't run away from our home.

She is my family as much as we say she isn't.

The Peahens

River noise replacements have appeared.
Massive rumble of the freeway
in the afternoon. Truck going down
through its gears. Helicopter cutting a circle.
Across the street the black and white dotted
dog some call Daisy or Droopy or Bonnie
looks like a cow grazing on the steep lawn.
That's where the peahens stood so still
the day one of them walked in front
of a car. Her wings hushed in air
and whacked on the pavement
and a thick red river of blood pooled
like red tar on the asphalt.
Her sisters stood like frightened girls
or stone statues. They ignored the wake
of bread bits and bird seed I set out.
They didn't venture onto the street
much after that. Then someone shot one
from its perch. One was stolen. One's left.
I hear her calling over the rush of wind
in the avocado tree.

Kristina McHaddad

Another Body of Water

It is the cool liquidness of you
that I catch
at the backs of my knees
now and then,
a mountain rain
tracing a length of leg,
the curve of my stomach,
water pouring lightly
from fingers and mouth
and breath
into a desert dryness,
blue-green drops onto sand
eroding me into wanting you.

Buying Stones

Turquoise
Lapis
and Malichite-Azurite
beneath our fingers,
and you and I
are striking deals today,
you telling me
that I didn't bargain for this
part of you,

cool cracking stone
and the light cloudiness
of the day.

And to myself I say
I never bargained
for any of you,
one part or another;
and I wonder how anything
so hard
so deeply colored
so strongly earthbound
could ever really be bargained for.

We wear each other
throughout the morning of the next day
beneath our clothes,
finger stones
and touch,
our bodies warming the cool smoothness.

We pull each stone from hundreds,
each one too precious
to ask the cost.

Jennifer Wolfe

Ground Zero

All night you have been telling me
what will happen later
thinking to make me impatient
staring into my eyes
as if you have never seen eyes
and it works, I am impatient
until now, watching this couple
she is achingly pretty
in a tight dress
and shiny stockings, shoes
kicked off, hiding in a corner
he is wearing blue jeans
and a prep school tee
They have got each other
by the hips, rocking back
and forth in a ritual
Her head is thrown back, eyes closed
and she is laughing
her laughter drains me
so I turn around
I say, let's go
let's go back to my place
let's get this over with.

The White Temple

Our meeting was planned
five thousand years ago
laid brick upon brick by
slaves sitting on the banks
of the Euphrates
weaving the elaborate
labyrinth around a core

not even the architect
could find the infant
sacrificed for the cornerstone
the cattle horns buried
in the foundations
icons of birth and sex
and death hidden in the mosaics
patterned on the passage walls.

We run through history,
animal husbandry, Egyptian queens,
dense stifling cities, steamy
August nights spent in smoky rooms,
loneliness eating through the urban rhythms
and we collide in the innermost room

both of us knowing, even as you
pull my head back by the hair,
exposing my throat to your obsidian,
that the slaves
are filling in the labyrinth.

Mary M. Harris

Dirge

Men do not cry
and my father never did
until my mother died.
He stood in the front of her closet,
swaying and sobbing, choosing
a dress for the viewing, settling on
the floral rayon she wore on Sundays.
In the church heavy with incense,
he kissed her corpse, his copious tears
beading on her cheeks waxen as plastic fruit.
He has not ceased crying since
a grief counselor assured him
men are allowed to cry,
and he does, woefully,
for all the losses drowning
in unshed tears inside him:
when at eighteen he sailed to America;
the war, a soldier he killed with a bayonet;
how he surrendered his seventh baby, stillborn,
in a casket white and compact as an eggshell cocoon;
the son who buried his feelings in drugs after
growing up believing that men cannot cry
because his father never did.
Tears never changed history,
but still my father cries,
a wailer at the wall
he erected.

Mincemeat

Grandma made mincemeat out of Christmas,
shredded holidays with her tart tongue.
One bitter year, she baked pies filled
with minced meat, gray and glutinous,
that no one ate, merely poked at pieces
on plates, molded crusts into designs.

Her sharp eye snapped the scene
faster than Kodak and she whisked away
loaded plates like dirty laundry.
"You do not deserve homebaked pie!"
she declared, not mincing words,
and carted her dessert home.

I wondered if she pitched each pie
like a frisbee from the car window
on the desert highway to Sun City
and wished just one of us
had loved her enough to choke
down a piece of her wretched pie.

Sestina for a Son

Lamplight like a halo
encircles him, a wreath
of gold borrowed from some Madonna and son
whose canvas cracks like skin stretched over bone,
sepia and ochre muted in golden
shadow. He is the center

of radiance, like the sun's center

exploding into a fiery halo
of rays, molten, golden.
Falling across his brow, a bronze wreath
crowns his head. He basks to the bone
in the warmth. My son

is unaware I watch him, this son
whose fingers arc above the center
of the keyboard, his backbone
sturdy, straight. A burnished halo
frames his face like a wreath.
His skin is amber, reflecting the golden

cast it had at birth, jaundiced, golden
like a gilded calf. Any mother loves her son
as much, would anchor his thorny wreath
to her head, suffer spikes through the center
of hands instead, bear his cross and halo
like a martyred saint. As marrow to bone,

he fills the core of my being. Flesh and bone,
my passion is manifest in this golden
image. I claim no revelation, no halo
for this vision, no longer my son
but his own creation, the center
of his universe. Chords echo, a wreath

of braided notes. He weaves this wreath.
Fragile as eggshell, dense as bone,
he emerges from the center
of an embryo. Its yolk quivers golden
at release. In silhouette, my son
refracts the spotlight into a halo.

Surrounded by a wreath of golden
light, he presses bone to ivory. My son
strokes the keys. He is my center, my halo.

Photo Gallery


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WILL BE EATEN
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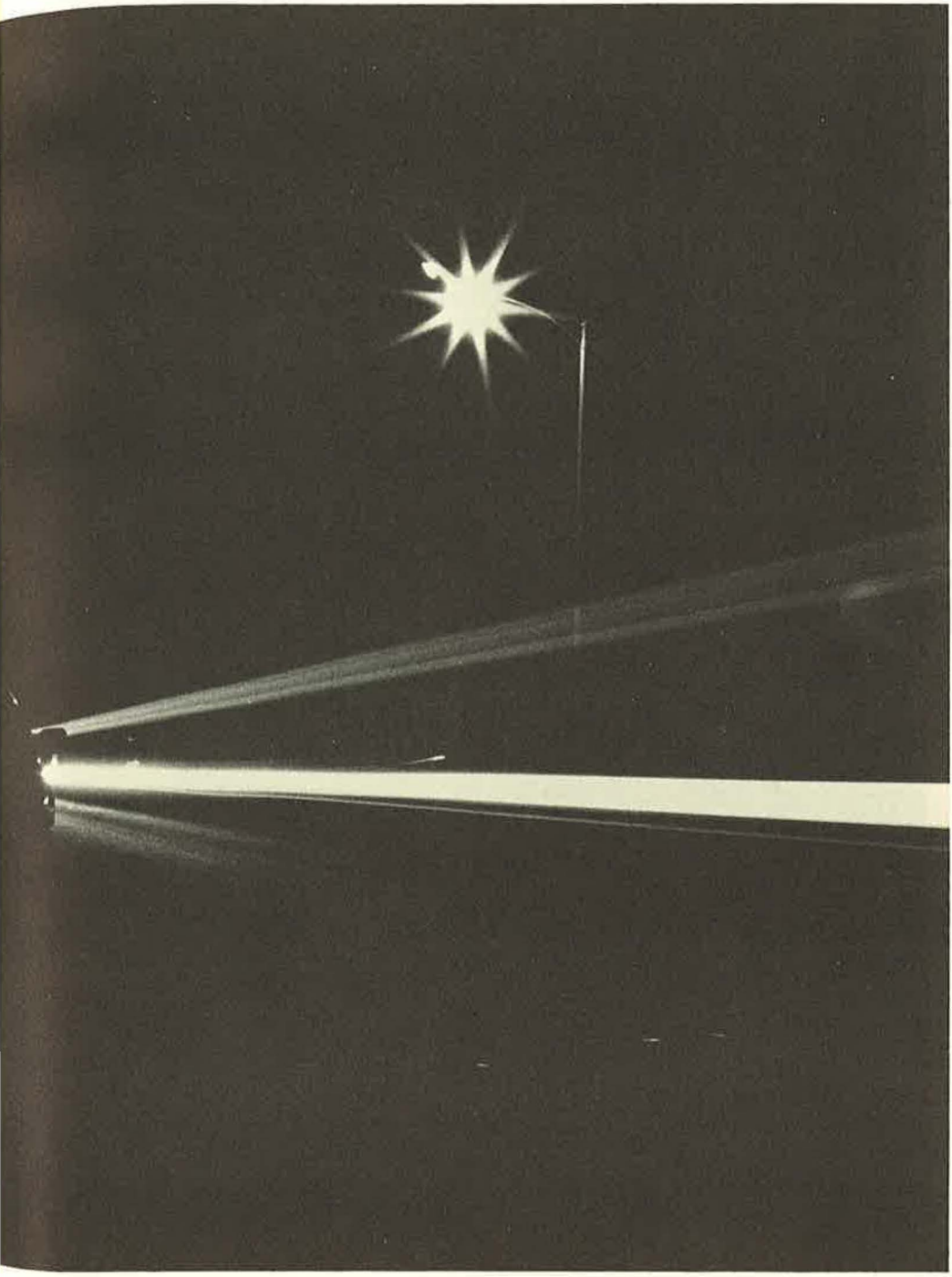

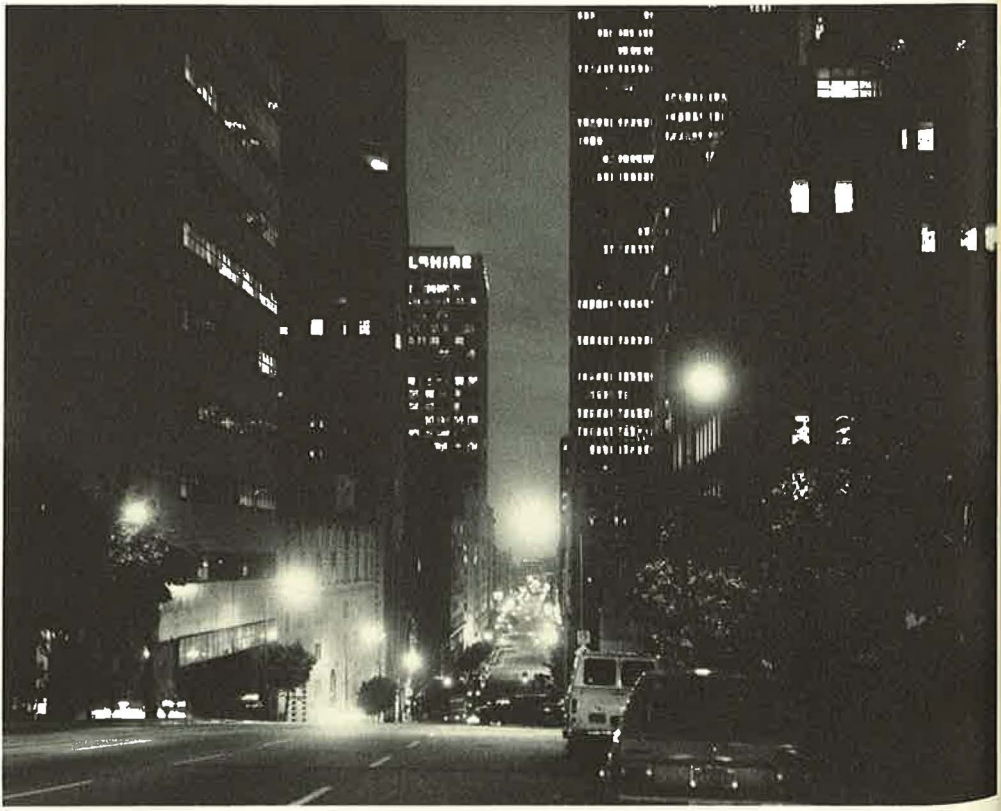


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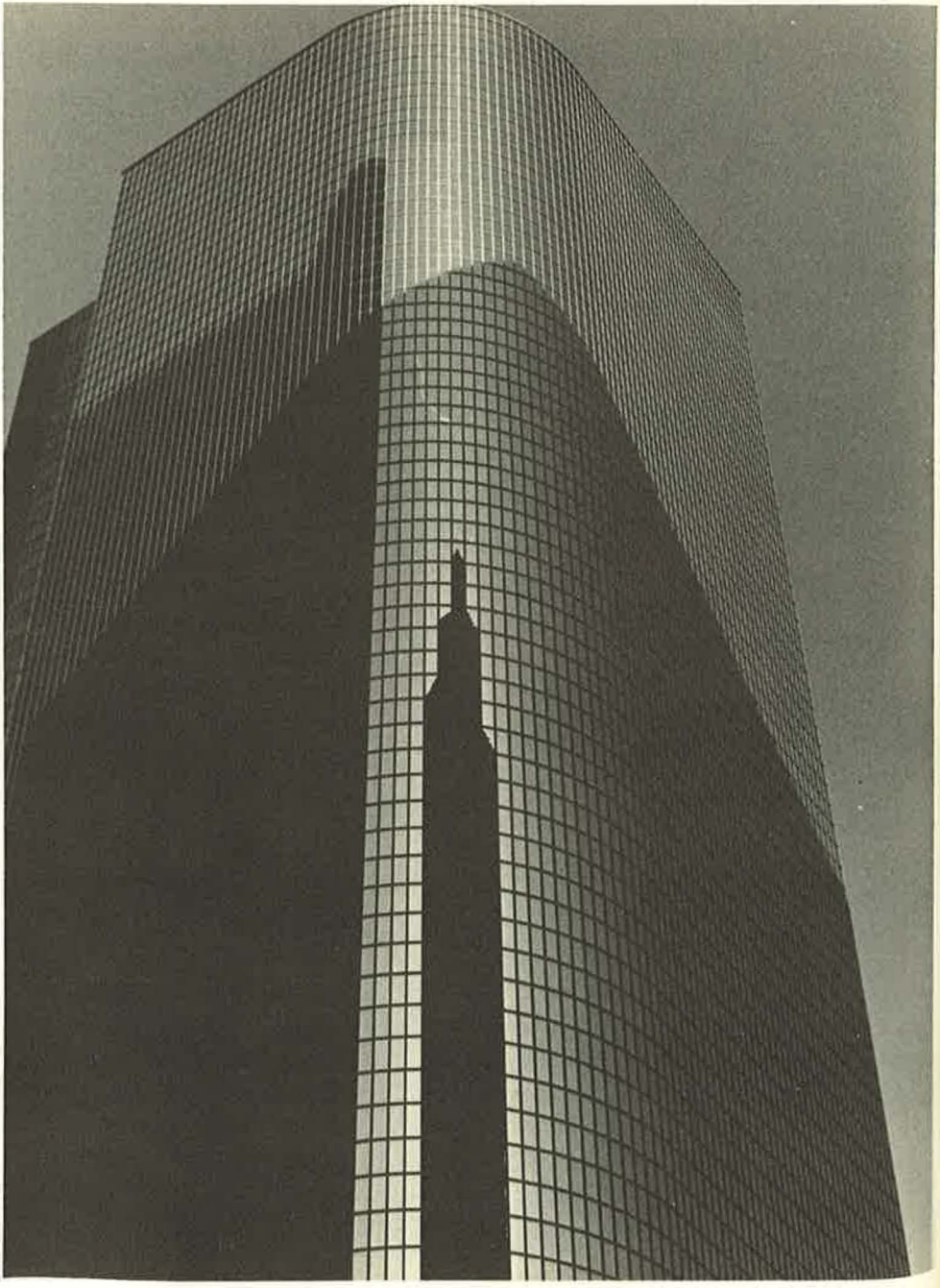


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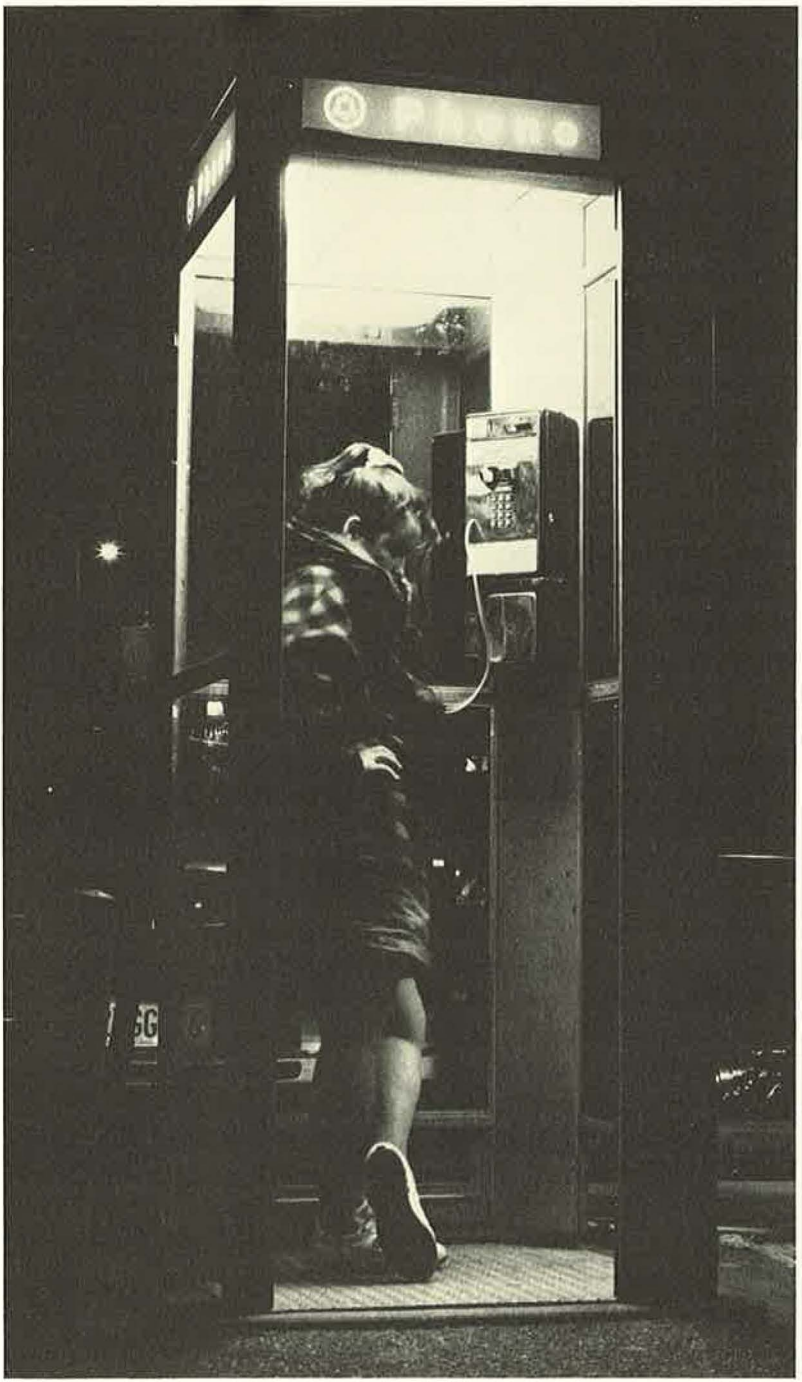

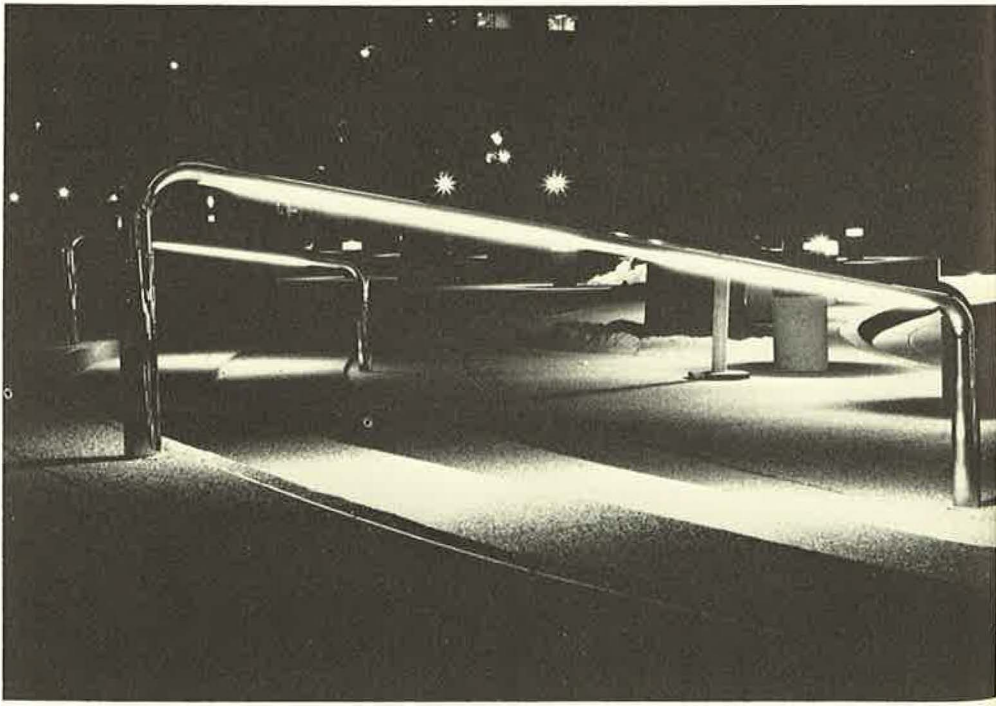

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Grant Cogswell

Agamemnon and Clytemnestra Find Themselves in a Mexican Prison, ca. 1910

They're here again, in the Yucatan Gaols for the murder of their daughter, Iphenia Aquiana, with a knife, on the cutting block in the kitchen of their house, the finest in town. Soon, she will be acquitted, and will have to find a 'lover', she will hire a paisano, and come back to the Gaols with a net for Agamemnon when he is in the bath. They will kiss, and hold each other for a moment while the paisano watches, then he will help her throw the net, Agamemnon will sink in the bathwater. It has always been this way, except in France in 1479, when the Clerical Guard found the books of retrieval and reincarnation in the high house; they both burned for being witches, with baby Iphegenia too.

So the next one is like this: On a summer day in 1947 in Abrams Bridge, California they each appear into the world on Highway 85 on opposite sides of town and walk to the center where they meet, all passion in front of Caleb Sumer's lemon grove. They buy a house in the West Bridge, and Agamemnon (Calvin Parris here), an old warrior who studies these things in the news, knows that this world is one which may be plunged into fire soon; the neighbors make plans to store food, line their basements with lead. Then this is the last life, they decide. And if the gods cast them into the dark forever after, they will have led a quieter life, once. Agamemnon does not want to have to slaughter Iphegenia in her cheerleading uniform as an offering to any god—and maybe those gods are dead. And they will grow old here, with the sun and the dry hills, a place not unlike Achaea, and cars are fun.

Caleb, Living on a Big Planet

"It's for a killer strange hot sunshiney day out there, Caleb," he says to me, "You comin' out?"

He's at the door in his flight jacket and the dust is falling in layers out there on the wide low horizon. It's such a big planet, and everything is so far apart. The horizon is a thousand miles away, so you can see everything, all the tests. One last week was a doozy, in the North, a big red ball that just appeared and sat, we called the Hendersons across the Plate to ask if they'd seen it, they had and said it was nice.

You can hear the distance, even on the phone. It is the silences that are bigger than all of this; bigger than the fusion shots, bigger than the sky all around us, so that it is even bigger than him in the doorway, smiling and his eyes shock blue from always watching tests, saying, "You comin' out, Caleb? You comin' out?"

Three Years Later, He's Back This Night And I See Them Touch

The night I came up from the field there was a trailer in the yard, one of those old bullet ones, aluminum tapered down to the end with the license plate, PENNSYLVANIA.

She was inside with him, the both of them swaying in the soft light to music I couldn't hear, me in the yard with the crickets and the hum of the road.

Swung once, twice, and took her down, there was a few noises and they stood out, but other than that, not much. I wondered how, after three years it was so quick, to fall into those old ways and rhythms.

Like the Sdwang, and their dream-religion taking up the Liberian settlers from South Carolina like back into the fold, and

then the missionaries coming thirty years later and finding their cousins, a new Sdwang, spearing the pale fish in underground caves, playing harmonicas in tattered cotton dresses and black-cloth coats and singing a Blues for Africa; them dancing on the hillsides and smoking the dried skins of caterpillars.

So I know how it is and have felt it, a pull at your core. When the full moon rises in your head, and there is nothing to stop it.

Fay Jensen

Resuscitation

At 7:05 AM it is cold in Delivery Room C. I'm half asleep at the scrub sink.

"Death Valley," Dennis said last night, "has stars like you have never seen." He wants me to go camping with him and Billy.

I tie the mask up over my cap and scrub quickly. Yellow foam pools in the drain when I rinse my arms. I shiver, and my breath is warm under the mask.

Dennis loves the offbeat. He brought me a meteorite once from somewhere near Lancaster. It is much heavier than it looks because there is iron in it. Meteorites are rare, I've heard.

"Are you the resuscitation nurse?" It is McDonald, the pediatric intern on-call.

"Yes."

"We have a crash C-section for fetal distress."

I know that and McDonald knows me. This is his way of greeting me. I keep rinsing. The soap runs off my fingers.

When I see the meteorite in my living room, I get a warm feeling. Photographed up close it looks like a big black mountain. I thought it was strange when Dennis gave it to me, but I like it now. About camping in Death Valley—"I'd rather," I said, "take a bath in thumbtacks."

I'm awake now. I dry my arms to the elbows and follow McDonald to the infant resuscitation bed. He works the laryngoscope blade up and down maybe three times, to check if the light comes on when he extends it from the handle, then he lays it on the bed. I check the equipment: suction gauge on, oxygen bag connected, catheters ready? We're ready.

The obstetrical team is talking quietly, concern visible above their masks. The obstetrician is between the mother's blue-draped legs. He speaks quickly to the anesthesiologist, who touches a dial and injects something into the mother's arm from a syringe connected there. The circulating nurse is moving fast and I move out of her way. McDonald checks the suction again. His face is red above his mask, and shiny. The baby, according to the fetal monitor, has late decelerations and prolonged bradycardia. We plan to resuscitate.

The mother groans, cries, and there is a gush of water like an upturned pail. And then out comes this dwarf. Of course I cannot see that it is a dwarf at first. At first, I cannot see anything because the drapes and everybody are in the way. I stand on tiptoe to see the obstetrician. His forehead gleams with sweat and everyone over there has stopped talking. I watch the expression in his eyes.

The baby is placed between McDonald and me on the resuscitation bed. Now I see it is a dwarf—small, and blue as the paper drapes. I see that, and something in me folds up like a tent.

McDonald has a little gold loop in one ear. He always wears rubber exam gloves in the nursery, and all the babies get examined by him like that. Once I asked him, "Why the gloves?" He said he wasn't taking any chances. I said I thought maybe he was getting ready to clean the toilet bowl, and everybody laughed—except McDonald. He gave me the blandest smile you could imagine. That smile irritates me.

I stare at his gold earring now, waiting. His eyes dart from the dwarf to the suction gauge to me. The OB team is busy with the mother, and he and I are alone with the baby. He opens the laryngoscope blade and fumbles with the endotracheal tube.

I stand there perfectly still, taking in the terribly small chest, the stunted extremities, the deepening blue color.

"It's a dwarf," I say slowly.

"I see that," he says, and I imagine a bland smile under his mask.

I haven't done anything yet. It's only been a few seconds but I sense he is waiting for me. I'm not frightened. I know how to resuscitate a cyanotic baby. This is—well—a dwarf.

He is already positioning the baby's head.

"Are you going to resuscitate?" I look at him steadily.

"We have to."

"We do?" I'm staring at the baby now.

"Yes." But he sounds less certain, and he gives me a long look. "At least until Dr. Stone gets here."

Something in me has to be forced, but once I begin I move as well as ever. I hold the head for him. He opens the mouth and inserts the metal blade of the laryngoscope. His hand shakes as he inserts the tube along the track of the blade and into the trachea. When he removes the laryngoscope, I attach the oxygen bag to the tube and squeeze it very fast, but nothing happens. The baby remains blue. McDonald listens to the chest with his stethoscope.

"Let me bag," he says. I hand it to him, and I listen to the lungs while he squeezes the bag. Nothing.

The anesthesiologist has come over to us now, and he offers to try. He pulls out the endotracheal tube and puts it in again. There are no breath sounds this time, either. The baby's color is a deep gray-blue.

"Well look at that chest," the anesthesiologist says, shaking his head. It is abnormally small, bell-shaped, like something kept squeezing it and it never grew to a normal size.

By now I have the heart monitor connected. The heart rate is very low, less than fifty per minute. McDonald tells me to do chest compressions.

"Chest compressions won't help if you can't ventilate," I say.

"Just do it," he says, and I do.

I compress the chest with my thumb over the sternum, my fingers underneath the rib cage. The line jumps simultaneously on the monitor with each compression. The chest wall is thin and I feel each rib with my fingers. I begin to look at the baby instead of the monitor.

It is a boy. The head is too large and the forehead protrudes so that the eyes almost disappear under the large brow. The feet are malformed on the fat, short legs. I glance at the clock. The baby is more than ten minutes old.

The Chief Pediatric Resident arrives. Her name is Linda Chang. She also tries to insert the endotracheal tube, but the baby's color remains blue. Several times she says she wishes Dr. Stone

would arrive. While we wait for him, I assist her and McDonald to insert a catheter into the baby's umbilical artery. The anesthesiologist compresses the chest.

Dr. Stone arrives, looking energetic and concerned. He again replaces the endotracheal tube. Again there is no improvement.

"Looks like he may have hypoplastic lungs," he says. Then he laughs—a high, nervous laugh. He always laughs at strange moments. I used to wonder how he could. I still notice it—the way the sound clashes with the efficiency of the delivery room, but I don't wonder any more. It's like McDonald's gloves; I'm used to it.

The x-ray machine arrives. After the films are taken Dr. Stone goes off to read them. The mother has been wheeled out and we have settled into our situation. McDonald gives oxygen, Linda compresses the chest, and I administer drugs through the umbilical catheter. In a while Dr. Stone returns.

"Stop the resuscitation," he says. "The baby has hypoplastic lungs." He is holding the x-ray.

It is as if God has spoken. We stop immediately. But then we stand there awhile looking confused at each other, at the baby. McDonald keeps holding the oxygen bag and rubbing it with his thumb.

"Come see the x-ray," Dr. Stone says, excited. He walks over to the view box and thrusts the x-ray up into it.

The others join him. I don't want to look at it just now. He points out the absence of lung tissue and various other abnormalities.

I touch the baby's forehead. Linda Chang takes a step forward and stands next to me. I realize she has been there and not with the others.

"I really tried," she says in a soft voice that is really a whisper. Her eyes are very shiny.

I watch her for a while and when she doesn't leave, I touch her shoulder. "It's not your fault," I say.

She nods and lowers her head even lower. Then she touches my arm and whispers something that sounds like gratitude, and she joins the others.

There is laughter over there and Dr. Stone's voice rises above

it. The room seems to darken. I can see them in the corner, silhouetted against the whiteness of the view box. They are caught there like an exposed negative—each expression, each turn of the head is frozen in discordant laughter.

I clear away the mess around the resuscitation bed. The mother will want to see him. I give him a bath. His forehead is greasy with white vernix from delivery. Washing his face, I see that the nose is delicate and fine. His chest is bruised from the compressions—ugly, thumb-sized marks. I wonder if I made them.

Beneath him, the drape is stained and wet. I change it for a printed baby blanket. The animals on it are faded. As I begin to peel the tape from his upper lip where the endotracheal tube is held in place, McDonald sees me from across the room.

"You should probably leave that in for autopsy," he says.

I remind Dr. Stone that the mother hasn't seen her baby. He tells me quietly that I can remove it along with the umbilical catheter. McDonald starts to argue, but Dr. Stone waves this away, and I can see McDonald watching me as I remove the tube.

I dress the baby for his mother in a shirt and blanket. Only his face shows with the perfect nose.

"I need blood for chromosome studies," Stone says suddenly.

I ask him why he didn't get it before I removed the catheter.

"I—forgot it." Apologetic.

I tell him to get it himself and he does. I can see McDonald watching me again. When they unwrap the baby, I pick up a paper towel and start wiping a counter that doesn't need it.

After they leave, I fix the baby again and take his picture three times with the Polaroid. One is overexposed and the second is blurred. After dimming a light I hold very still and shoot. That one is good. I set it next to him on the bed and give it to the delivery nurse to give to his mother.

"Thanks," she says, and she finds it hard to look at me. "Shall I take him to his mother now?"

"Yes," I say. "We're finished here."

At 1:00 PM I am teaching CPR.

"Tell me, nurse," Mr. Trei interrupts, "If my baby stops breathing, and I do this cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, will I save her—if I am successful—for a longer time?"

He says the words "cardio-pulmonary resuscitation" rather awkwardly. Behind the thick glasses his eyes are red.

"Well," I say, hesitating, "until the next time."

"But how do you know there will be a next time? Maybe she will get over—?"

Here his voice breaks. He searches my face for something; then he puts his head on the table, over his arms, next to the plastic resuscitation doll I have been using to teach him.

His shiny black hair is so close to the table. I think about my own breathing and the dull ache up under my eyebrow. In the silence I tell myself that a dwarf was born today, and now I am teaching Mr. Trei how to resuscitate his baby. My eyes are dry, and I wish very much that I could leave. I wish his baby didn't have Trisomy 18. I wish that I could see Dennis.

"Trisomy 18 is—" I stop, and he looks at me expectantly.

"It is—terminal." The last word sticks in my throat. We have been over this—the same thing, over and over.

The silence is long, but I cannot think of anything to say. Finally I speak without knowing what I will tell him.

"Mr. Trei, there isn't anything you or I can do."

He looks at me, waiting.

"If—if only you could accept that," I say, but more to myself than to him.

His eyes fill up again and he presses his palms over them and is quiet. I feel like touching him and when I do, he nods, and his eyes are still closed tightly.

"Do—do you want to continue?" He nods. "You don't have to do this, Mr. Trei."

"Yes," he says, "I have to." So we try it again.

At 3:00 I give report to the on-coming nurse.

"How was it with Mr. Trei?" she says.

I smile at her—the blandest smile I can imagine—and she looks at me strangely. I look at the clock—Dennis will be packing tonight. It is difficult to concentrate.

In Dennis's apartment, Billy is playing with the camping gear spread all over the living room. I set the pizza box on the counter and offer him a slice.

"Sure," he says, reaching for it. He is small for six and his jeans

need hemming. I wonder if Dennis will ever hem them.

"Sally, are you coming camping with Dad and me?" He holds the pizza in one hand and continues to rummage through a pile of string and utensils on the floor.

"No, Billy. I'm not coming."

"Why not?"

Dennis lounges on the arm of the sofa with his legs stretched out. The white t-shirt is tight across his chest and when he folds his arms, with his shoulder muscles tensed, I get a warm feeling from watching him. He's forty-three—fifteen years older than I am—and maybe he sees this Death Valley trip as a way—

"Dad? Why isn't she coming?"

"I think she wants to stay home, Billy."

"Oh. You'd rather stay home?" He rolls his eyes in exaggerated disbelief.

"I don't like the desert, Billy."

"But Dad says it's really neat." He shrugs and stammers a little, looking confused at me.

"How was work today, Sal?"

"A dwarf was born." I take another bite, pulling cheese.

The muscles under his t-shirt are moving. I can see them while he packs a box on the dining room table.

"Want to tell me about it?"

He says it so nonchalantly, with such studied casualness, that I laugh.

"No," I say, watching his shoulder muscles contract, then relax.

Billy tells me about his friend Jake who has a pool table in his house. Jake's older brother is teaching him to play pool. We roll up his sleeping bag twice and then we play a game of chess, and Billy wins. He takes his queen, laughing, and rolls it in his hand, then he tosses it to the other hand and does the same thing.

After a while Dennis puts him to bed. I can hear voices arguing in the bathroom—one urgent and unhappy, the other firm, amused.

Out on the balcony there are only a few stars, like tiny chips. The trees rustle at the curb a story below. It feels so cool.

"I didn't expect to see you tonight," Dennis says, hugging me from behind.

"I was lonely." His lips are against my neck.

"You didn't have to let Billy win."

"I didn't. I'm a lousy chess player."

"Tell me about the dwarf." His voice is close to my ear.

"It died."

"You want to tell me?"

I say nothing, and for awhile we watch the trees moving. I can feel his breathing against the back of my chest.

"Come with us this weekend," he says, sure of himself.

"Yes. I will." I say it so quickly that he laughs, surprised.

"I thought you'd rather take a b—" I put my hand over his mouth and he mumbles the rest under it.

We pack some clothes for me and he gets out another sleeping bag. I know he's wondering.

In bed, I feel him watching me, so I ask him, "Why Death Valley?"

"You'll see." He's so sure of himself.

"You," I tell him slowly, "are really not my type."

"Oh, really?" He bunches his pillow and turns away. Awhile later he turns back to me and his eyes are dark.

"Why did you say that?"

"Well, sometimes you aren't."

"And am I your type tonight?"

"I think so."

He pulls the blanket. "Great." Then he turns away from me and is silent.

I lie there awhile wishing I were in Tahiti, surrounded by lush fruit.

In the morning, Billy sits between us in the pick-up. His head snaps left and right under his blue Dodger cap. He is eating a sandwich and telling us jokes, waiting for us to shake our heads. Later, he falls asleep with his legs against my thigh, his cap still in place and his head on Dennis's lap.

The tan hills and the brush look burnt in the glaring sun, but the sky is very blue, clear. Insects splatter up the windshield, turning it pale brown. Dennis puts Janis Ian on the stereo and the sagebrush smells pungent and sweet and the dust seems everywhere; on the windshield, in my throat, my hair, and clinging to my skin that is alternately wet with perspiration and then dry and sticky from the wind that blows through the open windows. Once we pull off the

road to look at some white flowers that are blooming in patches. My tank top is stuck to my back. It is quiet, and a little frightening—the thought of being alone out here without a truck—in the heat.

Death Valley has sand dunes. When we reach them, I get my Nikon and start taking pictures. The wind is blowing and surely getting in the camera, but I don't care. I pull my cap down and shut my eyes while it blows. When it stops, I feel glad at the sight of the ripples in the dunes. I click the shutter over and over, running up and down the soft hills of sand, sitting in it, feeling my shoes fill up. After a while I stop taking pictures and sit there staring out over the dunes. The patterns near my feet are beautiful—intricate, soft waves of sand—but after a while, I see only the horizon and endless dunes stretching in front of me. I feel a tightness in my throat—something stabbing me. They are beautiful, enormous, an ever shifting scene. I imagine that if I stood still and the wind blew awhile, they would cover me with their lifelessness, effortlessly.

I take a few more pictures. Then Dennis takes some of Billy and me. Billy puts his arm around my hips and giggles nervously for the pictures. We empty our shoes before we get in the truck, but sand seems everywhere after that.

In the late afternoon we reach the salt formations. Their strange shapes and whiteness seem eerie in the glow of sunset. They seem to stretch forever—endless, petrified patterns left behind by some ancient world. Billy runs out far across them, calling to us. Dennis stays with me awhile, then he walks out to Billy.

I start taking pictures, but it is hard to tell the salt formations from the horizon in the deepening colors of the sunset. It is getting dark quickly, and I can barely see Dennis and Billy anymore. I put away my camera, and walk out to them.

When we reach our campsite it is dark. We haul things out of the truck and then we cook the best hamburgers in the world. The coldness of the desert night is a surprise to me. We pull on heavy sweaters and sit around the fire, and Billy asks Dennis a steady stream of questions about the desert.

Later, Dennis and I zip our sleeping bags together and Billy's is a few feet away. He is snoring softly. The cold air chills my cheeks and nose.

When I look up from the sleeping bag and see all those stars, so

huge and bright and quiet up there, I can't believe it. It is the unexpected peacefulness I feel in a church. I feel so small. But it is a good feeling. I'm a part of that velvet, white silence up there.

I feel my body relax next to Dennis, and I can smell him. He smells a little like sweat and dust and the musty smell of the sleeping bag, and there is that smell that is only him. These are comforting, durable smells. Something in me aches when I see those stars, and I feel lost. So I begin to cry, and I can't stop. Dennis holds me against his chest, very tightly, and though I want to feel embarrassed, I can't.

"Tell me about it now." His voice is low.

I talk about the dwarf, and McDonald, and Dr. Stone, and Mr. Trei. They are as one thought, intertwined, not easily unraveled.

"Your job must be very hard," he says at last.

I feel the resonance of his chest against my ear, and the up and down movement of his breathing. His voice fills up my body. I feel so warm, but he keeps holding me tightly, and finally, we fall asleep.

"First light."

Dennis is waking me up. He keeps nudging me until I climb out of the bag and grope for my camera.

"Aren't you getting up?" I ask, shivering in the dark.

"No."

I kick him, fall on him, clutch his hair. The sleeping bag is cold between us. I want to tell him something—something big that will make everything come into focus for us, like a turn of the lens. My throat tightens.

"Thanks, Dennis."

"For what?" He stops struggling.

"You would say that." I straighten and jerk my sweat shirt.

He puts his arms up behind his head. He is waiting.

"What is it, Sal?"

"It—it's everything—and the stars too." I feel breathless and then I kiss him—a long kiss. Meteorites, I've heard, are rare.

I climb the small hill at the edge of the campsite. Maybe ten minutes I wait there, shivering. Now the light comes steadily over the hill. Suddenly the dwarf is there, with Mr. Trei. I click my

shutter. The colors quickly become beautiful. Peach, yellow, orange. "Click," and the sun is higher now. Everything is smaller, reduced in Death Valley, in the shifting dunes, in the starry night, in the morning light. "Click," and again, faster, and the hills are a silhouette against the rising sun. "Click," and then it is over; the sun is above the hills and the desert heat will overtake us soon.

L. M. Lopez

White Radio

I'll ask Felix to take the box out, she thought. The box in the closet. Felix should be able to do that. Where is Felix? Gone so long. He had beaten the avocados out of her tree with the bat. After enough time passed she'd given him the bat. A Louisville Slugger. He'd been glad to get it. When he smiled he had hardly a harelip at all.

Anna Maria would be coming soon to clean out the drawers, the cupboards, the closet. Felix had to take the box out today. Maybe he would bury it. He is a good boy. Was it Felix or Anna Maria who found the pigeon chicks under the carport? One was smashed in its shell. The other, featherless and reptilian, the children carried in the cup of their small hands and fed dabs of rice from the tips of their fingers.

Anna Maria. That she and Luis, in their plodding ordinariness, should have such a child was a miracle of Jesus and all of the saints. Luis was squat, rest his soul, with the bulging eyes and the fallen jowls of a toad. She was large-boned, tall and strong. Her mild eyes too small for her broad Indian nose. Yet, Anna Maria dazzled. Her face of ovals, her slender neck, the glossy black volume of hair that tumbled down to her waist augmented her astonishing beauty.

Where could Felix be? Our Lady of Guadalupe on the bedstand held her ceramic arms out, the palms uplifted in supplicating inquiry. He didn't usually stay away this long. He came two, three times a day to press his small brown face against her window screen to ask for odd jobs to do for spending money. She kept some peppermint canes for him. She would give him two dollars to bury the box in the closet.

He would bury the box without looking inside. Anna Maria would poke and probe and come away with the darkness of a storm on her face. Anna Maria always had to know and when she knew she became unhappy. Felix would smile, say, sure, and the box would be gone.

Sometimes she thought she saw the cardboard vibrate with the lisping beat of a snare drum and the reedy whine of a saxophone wafting from sealed carton flaps. They called it, Swing, the music of the big bands. She should have taken it to the dump in the pickup, when she was able. She ought to have put it out with the trash long ago. But it was too much a trophy to throw away.

Her grandfather had a broad silver belt with lightning bars of turquoise in the buckle. He'd taken it from a dead Ute after a dance. He kept it all his life and wore it in his grave. She did not like to have the box buried, but it must be done for Anna Maria.

Anna Maria was just sixteen when she returned from an afternoon at the library with a tall redheaded serviceman. Her large eyes had been moist and glimmering with pleasure.

"Mama, Papa meet Cap."

"Pleased to meet you folks."

"He's stationed at the base."

"Had a forty-eight hour leave and decided to see town. Boy, I'm glad I did."

He smiled and squeezed their child around the waist. Elena could smell liquor on his breath. His collar was unbuttoned and a tuft of wiry orange hair sprouted from his exposed undershirt. Anna Maria had never held a man before and his meaty touch put her in his thrall. Luis squinted his distaste.

Elena fixed dinner for them. Steaming platters were her strongest memory. She turned her attention to the meal and kept her eyes averted from her daughter in the arms of that man.

"Is Anna Maria as good a cook as you?"

"Anna Maria is a child."

That was the only time Elena spoke to him that first evening. She would always remember the words she said to him as though they had been significant, or portentous.

Luis never did a thing. It was his way. He kept his lips pursed and knelt to pray at the small shrine of plaster santeros in the backyard. He spent time in the garden, weeding his tomatoes, when

Cap came to visit. He liked to find lizards under rocks and sever them neatly with his hoe. It pleased him to see the separated halves writhe away. Elena served food—rice, chicken, corn, squash. Platter after platter emerged from her small kitchen, balanced on her uplifted, supplicating palms. Anna Maria smiled and blushed.

Luis and Elena resolved to be tolerant, modern parents. They would not interfere with their daughter's love. They knew she would run off if they did.

Cap liked to sneak up on people. He walked on the balls of his feet and approached silently from behind, not speaking until he was sure his prey would be startled.

"Mama, I have wonderful news."

Anna Maria no longer went to the library. She spent most of her time waiting at the windowseat or rushing off to the drugstore to use the payphone.

"Mama, Papa, we have wonderful news!"

Once on the porch Elena heard their footfalls as they returned from a movie late at night. Then she heard Anna Maria's angry voice and the quick, dreadful sound of a slap. She rushed out to her daughter. Cap disappeared soundlessly into the night.

"Mama, don't turn the porchlight on."

She took her daughter in her arms. "You must let him go. I know he is a bad one."

II

"Mama, we're married. See my ring."

They had no money for rent or furniture so they moved into the quartito, a wooden shack, behind the garden.

One morning, Luis would not get out of bed. He lay with his arm slung over his chest. When Elena shook him, the arm swung free and hung motionless over the side of their bed. A stroke, the doctor said.

Cap liked Anna Maria to stay inside the small house. He did not like her to go to the main house.

"Your mama don't like me none. She give me them hateful eyes and don't say a word. She like to kill me, I know."

He did not re-enlist and could not find a job. The war had ended, jobs were scarce and often he drank too much to make it out

of bed. He lay in bed all morning and afternoon drinking whiskey from a clouded glass, smoking cigarettes and listening to the white radio.

It had been her gift to them. It cost too much. The sales clerk eyed her old black jersey dress and black button-top shoes suspiciously when he brought it off the shelf for her to see.

Instantly, she loved the clean white sides and shiny metal dial. It was broad, modern and beautifully white. She could see her large pocked face in its milky reflection. She had it wrapped and carried the unwieldy box in her lap on the bus.

Anna Maria delighted at the gift. It was the only valuable thing they owned. She glanced nervously at Cap before throwing her arms around her mother in thanks. Elena warned her daughter to keep the door and windows locked now that they had the radio. Cap rolled his eyes, picked up the radio and took Anna Maria home. They would not stay for dinner. Elena ate alone.

Elena often heard the syncopated strains of big band music floating from the windows of their small house. Sometimes the music blasted forth at full volume to mask the smashing glass and shouting within. Elena knelt by the Lady of Guadalupe and passed the rosary beads through her fingers, but transfixed by the votive flames dancing in their beveled cups, she knew it was not enough.

One late night Anna Maria thumped her fist against her mother's door.

"Mama, don't turn the porchlight on."

Anna Maria sobbed, hiccoughing convulsively, in her mother's arms. They sat in the darkness holding onto each other. Elena felt the wet stickiness of blood on her hands when she pushed her daughter's hair out of her face. She led her to the bathroom to clean up.

It had been surprisingly simple from that moment on. She found Luis' gardening gloves in the bureau drawer. She'd bought the bat for Anna Maria's birthday parties, when they would bring it out for the children to strike the pinatas. Elena pulled it out of the closet and placed it behind the front door while her daughter washed. She put her daughter to sleep in the big bed and crawled in with her. Elena waited until her daughter's breathing was slow and deep before climbing out of bed again.

She put the bat under a checked dish towel and tiptoed out of

the house and through the garden. The moist soil clung to her toes. She opened the door to the guesthouse with her own key. She waited, she had time, until her eyes could separate the shadows from the lumpish furniture. She crept slowly, on the balls of her feet, to the bedroom.

The piggish noise of Cap's snoring filled the cramped rooms. He had passed out with an empty bottle of Dewar's in his arms. His face was disfigured by deep sleep. His upper lip receded, baring his gums and teeth. His eyes were squeezed tightly shut under his pink freckled lids. His boxer shorts split at the crotch revealing a darkness within.

The first blow made a loud cracking sound. The next few blows thudded mutely in the fine pink mist. Then Elena plucked a cigarette from the pack on the night stand. It was difficult to manipulate stick matches wearing the heavy gloves, but finally she scraped a charcoal streak in the wall and a flame sputtered to life. She lit the cigarette and rested it in a glass ashtray. She reached to the window to grab the curtain. She dipped a fine gauzy corner into the ashtray. She lifted the radio from its table, wound the white cord carefully around its legs and carried it home with her.

The fire ate through the small house in minutes. When the engines arrived only glowing fragments of the frame caged the rolling, lashing flames. Elena restrained the hysterical Anna Maria in her strong arms. Felix, who was then nine, laughed and danced and clapped his hands in the swirling veil of soot.

When Cap's body was found it was no more than a fusion of charred bone on the steel bedframe.

III

After enough time had passed, Elena gave the bat to Felix. He'd been glad to get it. He was no longer a little boy, she remembered suddenly. She had seen him in a uniform. Vietnam. He didn't come home. His mother wept. Was it one, two, ten years ago? He had hardly a harelip, at all, when he smiled.

Ida Ferdman

Twisting the Knife

I always do things I shouldn't, and never know why. So the fact that I'm sitting here in this boarding room, in the city by myself, does not surprise me. A person can't go on doing what they want or what they shouldn't do forever and expect not to pay or end up alone. I thought running away to the city would put the final laugh on them, but it only ended up being another thing I shouldn't have done. Loneliness doesn't suit me. Doing things I shouldn't does.

Like the time in the movie theatre. Five or six jabbering girls sat behind Mom and me, making too much noise for my nerves to take. I pulled a jackknife from my pocket, and flexed it round and round. Threatening. I wanted rays of light to flash off the blade like in the movies, but in the darkened theatre the shiny metal remained dull. I twisted it round and round as if it were nothing more than a tootsie roll. No one noticed, not Mom, not the squawking girls. I folded the knife and put it away. I didn't concentrate on the movie after that. But that's the way I do things. Not really thinking first; not knowing why afterwards.

Sitting here alone, looking back, it only seems natural that when Dreysdon Jones asked me to his dad's office I would say yes, even though his dad and mine are rivals, owning the two hardware stores in town. Because going with Dreysdon was like slapping my dad across the face.

I met Dreysdon that Saturday night in front of his dad's store. The windows advertised beating Dad's prices (step up and get everything Jansen has for cheaper), not with much zip, but he thought it cut deep enough to make his business better. It didn't. Dreysdon had keys to his dad's place, like I had keys to mine. He

pulled me down on the carpet, breathing hard, and I tried to figure out what I was doing and why. It made me sick to look into his greasy pimply face and have his slick wet hair brush against my forehead. Pus oozed out from the corner of his left eye from some infection he got tramping through the woods. That didn't make it any better. And the more he pushed down on me the sicker I got. His face got shinier when he pumped in and out of me, sweating all over. His body, wet and slimy, slid on mine and made terrible burping noises when our combined skin stuck and unstuck. Dreysdon's sweat. And after he finished he did burp as if he'd just had the best meal of his life. And maybe I was something for him to have or maybe I like to think that way. I slipped on my Levi's and t-shirt, leaving my underwear in the office because I wanted his dad to find out. I know now that the only reason I went with Dreysdon was to have the pleasure of doing something I shouldn't have done. Dreysdon tried to call after me, saying he wanted to cuddle a while longer, but I made it across the baseball field before he had time to pull his jeans over his big ass. The whole thing made me sick and I threw-up under our front porch before I went inside and showered off Dreysdon's sweat, hoping I'd never do that again.

At times like those I ran away to Grammy Hughes' place. She wasn't my grammy, and no one could remember exactly whose grammy she was. I once heard that her children moved away the year after her husband died, but no one can remember him either. Someone also told me she never married and never had any children, but had a torrid love affair with one of the mayors in town and never wanted anyone else after he rejected her for his own wife. But some said she moved here from Russia after the revolution and her whole family got killed over there and she never was the same after that. I don't believe that one. I think her husband deserted her during the depression and Alice Hidgens from the other side of town's really her daughter, but won't own up to it because Grammy does things different from other people.

Alice looks like her and so do her kids, all with the same pug-type nose and square jaws and straight blond hair like the kind Grammy had as a girl. She showed me a picture of herself wearing wide shirts and saddle shoes. In the picture she looks like Alice, except prettier. But that's just what I think. Grammy lives in a

house like plywood nailed together, over in the old town that got destroyed by a hurricane sometime in the sixties. She won't move into the new part of town. After the wind blew her house around she nailed it up and put new glass in the windows and kept on living there, by herself, away from everyone. But I like her and visit when things go crooked.

Here the closest thing to Grammy Hughes is the crotchety old bag upstairs on four. Mrs. Johnson. I tried being friendly with her when I first moved in, but she wouldn't have it. I marched up to her place with some cherries, thinking I'd teach her Grammy's pit-spitting-secrets.

"I don't like young people and I don't like cherries," She said right off before I could even put a cherry in my mouth.

"I just want to introduce myself," I said, already realizing that she wouldn't be interested in pit-spitting or Grammy Hughes. She never asked me in, only said, "We've met," and shut the door in my face.

I could feel her through the closed door listening to make sure I'd head down the stairs. I thought I even heard her breathing hard on the other side, waiting for my footsteps on the carpet-covered hardwood steps. I thought of Dreysdon breathing hard that Saturday night. I imagined her wrinkled face and droopy-bloodshot eyes squished up into themselves, and her ear pushed up against the door. Waiting. I never remember people in town waiting so hard for anyone to leave. I missed Grammy from the first, and shouldn't have run so far away this time. I still go up to the old bag's place even though she doesn't want me.

When I ran away that Saturday night with the smell of Dreysdon on me I headed for Grammy's, knowing she would smell him, but knowing she wouldn't bother me about it. She sat on her slated wood porch on a hardback chair with a bowl of cherries in her lap, chewing off the pulp and spitting the pits over the railing.

"Grammy," I said walking up the steps.

"Lily," she answered back, plain, with nothing intended in the tone of her voice. That's how it is between us.

I sat down on the cane chair next to her; it had rotten bits popping out in back. Grammy said the picture on the back of the

chair used to show a boy and girl kissing on a hammock under a cherry tree. I couldn't see it; it looked like twisted pieces of wood to me. But then again, I couldn't always see everything she saw, or tried to show me. I grabbed a hand full of cherries and crammed them in my mouth. Both of us tried to see how far we could spit the red-stained pits. They had more weight if we left some pulp on instead of sucking them dry. Grammy taught me that, along with how to make them fly farther.

"You have to puff out your cheeks," she said, "get a lot of air in, and hold the pit pursed between your lips, you get more pressure built up that way. Then shoot it out of your mouth like a pea from a shooter." It worked that way; it worked good.

I once tried pinning bull's-eyes to the trees beyond the house, "Let's make it a real contest," I said. But she said it would be no good like that.

"Take all the fun out of it. Why are you always in competition Lily?"

When no one found out about me and Dreysdon as I had expected, I kept on with him until someone did find out, but it wasn't easy letting people know. Dreysdon was scared his dad would kill him if he found out he was screwing a Jansen, because the only thing Mr. Jones hated more than communists or democrats was Dad, and I got swept onto that "b" list too; so I had to spread the news myself and by noon the next day everybody in town knew, including Dreysdon's dad and mine.

That night at dinner I walked into our kitchen and said Hi to Mom and Dad, smiling as if nothing had happened, but really smiling because they knew. Mom stood at the butcher block whacking a pork chop, beating it like she wished it were my head. I leaned over Dad and kissed his cheek. He screwed up his face like I had stuck a knife in him and twisted it round and round. One jab is never enough. I made him feel the point in his heart, which I had been breaking ever since puberty. He never did anything to me. But that's the way I do things. Always sticking it in and twisting it round and round.

"Hi, Lily, how's things today?" He knew me, and wouldn't give me the satisfaction of bringing up Dreysdon himself. I think

he wanted to give me the chance to fess up, to be honest. But that isn't one of my strong points.

"Everything's just fine," I said, pushing his paper away and sitting down on his lap as if saying you know I'm your little girl and you can't be mad at me.

Mom threw the pork chops on a greased-up pan on the stove, sending fat sizzling and spraying over the burners and the counter and the floor, muttering "Well it that don't beat all." She picked up the masher and beat down on some boiled potatoes in a bowl sitting on the counter.

"Something wrong Mom," I said, smiling all the while, sticking the knife in her too.

"If that don't beat all," she said again.

"Lily, did you happen to catch the baseball scores today?" No he wasn't going to give in; he wasn't going to mention Dreysdon.

"John, I swear you're going to spoil that child right out of existence," Mom said mashing those potatoes all the while. We both ignored her.

"Yeah I saw the scores, six to nothing, they had a good pitcher up today," I said.

"That's a shame," he said, "our team doesn't seem to have much luck this season."

"No, no they don't," I answered, fogging up his glasses with a hard breath, trying to wipe them clean with the palm of my hand, but smearing dirt on them instead. He took off his glasses and spit on the lens, then wiped them clean with a corner of his shirt.

"Why don't you both wash up for dinner," Mom said, finally giving in, "these chops are as fried as they're going to get." I kissed Dad on the lips and got off his lap, thinking I'd won that round and didn't have any more need for Dreysdon. At least not just then.

I was hoping I could get on better terms with Mrs. Johnson when she sent me to the corner the other day to pick up her tonic. I thought doing that errand for her would calm her down and make her like me more. But it didn't make her any more neighborly at all. When I brought up the tonic she was ready to slam the door in my face again, but I squeezed in through the doorway before she could.

"You sure have some pretty doilies on your furniture," I said,

pointing around her room at what seemed like hundreds of those things.

"Why don't you leave me alone," she said. "I don't trust you, and I don't know why either." I picked up a doily from the easy chair near the window. She'd tatted into it a picture of a girl holding a basket of flowers, but because of the lacy lines the girl's face looked as wrinkled as the old lady's in front of me.

"How do you make these pictures in here," I said. "I swear if each one doesn't have a different design." I know I should have left her alone, but I couldn't.

"Well I'm not real interested in telling you how I do it, and I want you to put that thing down before you get it dirty. Look at all the dirt under your nails," she said as she snatched the doily out of my hand.

I reached into my pocket and took out my jackknife. I chipped out pieces of the dirt and worked them into the palm of my hand. The old lady started breathing hard and put her blotchy hand over her mouth. I thought of Dreysdon again. I should've stopped then because I could see the whole thing scared her. But I didn't close the knife and put it away until I'd cleaned out from under every nail.

"Can I touch your doilies now," I said.

"You get out of here right now."

I left because I could see there was no talking to her, like there was no talking to Dreysdon. He had no sense.

Dreysdon wouldn't leave me alone. He kept after me to go with him to the lake since the office spot was found out.

"No, I told you once and I meant it," I said to him, leaving him standing in the diner, pieces of hamburger bun sticking to the corners of his mouth. He wanted me, but I didn't give. And he didn't let up. He showed up everywhere I went like a shadow, looking more faded and sickly every time.

I'd been dodging Dreysdon for two weeks when he stopped me that day on the baseball field. I tried to get around him, but he kept on.

"Lily, come to the dance with me, I don't care who knows about us. I love you." I wanted to laugh. He started sweating and his pimples went greasy again. He looked into my face like a sick puppy. I pulled my jackknife out of the back pocket of my Levi's and started cleaning dirt out from under my fingernails with the tip.

scraping it off on the front of my thigh.

"I'm not going to the dance with you," I said. I looked at a mound of dirt on the tip of the blade, then rolled it between my fingers and flicked it into the breeze.

"Come on, Lily, it'll be fun, you like me, I know you like me." He wasn't going to let up; I could tell that then.

He looked from my face to the blade and twitched when I twisted the knife round and round in my hand; both of us watched sun glint off the blade, sending streaks across his face. He went on again about the dance and loving me and not caring who knew. And I got more and more mad listening to him, seeing his pimply face bob up and down, looking shinier every time the flash of the blade whipped across his face.

Now I'm here in the city, alone, trying to figure it out and trying to make Mrs. Johnson into another Grammy Hughes. Some days I sit by the window and watch the rain fall and cover the concrete with slick sheets of water, turning it from white to gray. Some days I visit Mrs. Johnson, but she doesn't open the door since I showed her my knife. Other days I walk from block to block in this neighborhood looking for a friendly five-and-dime or a soda shop or a sign advertising a dance. But most days I sit up here in my room thinking, just wanting to go home but not wanting to at the same time, and knowing I'll have to when the money I took from Dad's cash drawer runs out.

That day I stood on the baseball field getting mad at Dreysdon I knew it was coming. I knew I was going to do something I shouldn't. I felt it welling up inside me. I tried to stop it, but it couldn't be helped. I held the knife by the handle, the blade end pointing straight down. Then I let the knife slip and watched it sink down into the middle of Dreysdon's left foot. One minute he stood with cool wet grass wriggling up through his bare toes, tickling him. The next minute he had my knife sticking straight up out of his foot like a fork in a thick bowl of chili. And it might as well have been for all the good it did me.

At first he didn't bleed. The knife went in clean and stuck hard with no place for it to move. But then Dreysdon jumped up and

down as if he just realized the pain. The knife slid back and forth in its groove; blood oozed out from the seams. When the knife finally popped up life spurted out of him in all directions, covering the small patch of grass we stood on. I saw his dad running toward us, scooped up my knife, and left Dreysdon hopping and yelling, knowing it wouldn't help any to hang around and listen to Mr. Jones tell me how bad I was, or say 'I told you so' to Dreysdon.

I ran, not really knowing where, but ending up at the lake anyway. Families sat near the shore having picnics. Couples kissed in the bushes trying not to be noticed. Children skipped rope and ran in circles catching butterflies. But I didn't care about them. I stripped off all my clothes and dived into the water, shutting out the picture that plowed through my mind of Dreysdon with the knife stuck in him. I still get shivers when I think about it. I swam until I made my toes touch the bottom. Then I crouched down and pushed off with both feet from the soft mud so that I came flying out of the water. I shot up and felt the cool wind wrap around me, naked for everyone to see.

I suppose after that last incident when everyone had had about as much of me as they were going to take and I'd made a fool of myself at the lake I should've gone straight to Grammy's instead of running here to the city. But I didn't sit long enough to think the whole thing out. I felt the cold air coming off the lake fast when I came out of the water and saw parents rushing their children away and some people laughing, and heard others saying I was crazy. Maybe the worst part was seeing Alice Hidgens there. I put on my clothes and ranpast herand Alice had to say, "Well Lily Jansen this is just like you."

But I think after being away this long everyone will be happy to see me. I'll still have the keys to Dad's store, and Dreysdon will take up chasing me again. And I just know that before long I'll be sitting back on Grammy's front porch spitting pulpy cherry pits over the railing, aiming them at the last tree before the road starts, but never making it that far.

Patti Scheibel

There in Front of the Window

I threw my sister's clothes out the window while she was taking a shower. Now she stands naked in front of the open window looking down at her clothes scattered across the parking lot. It's a hot bleached white day; the kind where even inhaling seems like too much work. She stands framed in the window like a picture in the museum, faded in the heat, dripping and glistening in the light, oblivious to her own exposure.

She will not move from there. She will stand there until gravity forces me to run downstairs and gather up her clothes into a big dirty bundle. I will carry it up to her and she won't say a word. She'll just look at me. She will put her clothes into the hamper because they touched the asphalt and shards of broken glass may have woven their way into the fabric. Then she will rummage through my cluttered closet for something to wear, peering at each item as though she can't bear the touch of material against her skin. She will put on the least offensive thing she can find, probably shorts and a t-shirt. After that she will hurt me in some way. I won't bother to run away or hide. She would wait for me if necessary.

I know this as a fact, the same way I know that I will continue to throw her clothes out the window for as long as we live together, barring bodily disablement. This scene will repeat itself over and over again until one of three things happen:

1) I will stop throwing her clothes out the window. Some things are addictive, after awhile you simply lose control. Watching her clothes flutter down from our second window is addictive. This is the least likely alternative.

2) She will beat me into a pulp. One day she will get lost in her

anger and she won't stop even if I scream. As long as she and her boyfriend are getting along alright, she hasn't had to work overtime and Dad hasn't called to ask if we've seen Mom lately, I don't have to worry. The odds are against me though.

3) Someday I will resist gravity and I won't run downstairs to gather up her clothes. She will stand there, window flung open, slowly hunching over as time passes and her bones become brittle. Long after her clothes have decayed in the parking lot she will still be there, gray and shriveled. Eventually she'll die, her naked body mummified in the heat there in front of the window like Stonehenge.

Marlene Pearson

Passion in Santa Monica

At this yogurt place I asked how many calories in a small? O not many the woman said not even in this Chocolate Passion. Passion reminded me of tropical beaches and I was at the beach, so I took one, sat outside on the aluminum chair, held my napkin from the wind, stretched out my legs, arms to the sun. A streetman came along

asking for money. I didn't have much so I just gave him a little change. He said thank you O god bless you thank you. The couple next to me said NO NO. The man swallowed his caramel and said all these people just keep asking everyone for money. He wiped the syrup from his moustache. The woman nodded, crossed and recrossed her white legs while the man could not stop talking. He said everyone just keeps giving them money they don't have to work just collect from everyone I work for a living if I just did what that man does asked everyone for, look he's asking and they're giving him a QUARTER, he's getting quarters from everyone he's going right down the line he must get 50 dollars a day if I did that I wouldn't have to work what do they think I am what is this charity I work for a yack yack

yack. I threw my dish in the trash. I walked past the two girls behind me who told the streetman NO NO if I give you my money I won't have money to buy the things I want to why should I give you my money. Then one said something and the streetman grabbed the pickle off her plate. He said thank you O thank you god bless you before he walked

away. When I was crossing the street some other man with a green nylon pack on his back said hello what a nice smile. I didn't know I smiled. I was reading a book and thought how strange for someone to interrupt someone reading a book while crossing the street. He said not many people here in California smile I'm from England and I give

massages you sure need a massage why just look at your back and just look at your shoulders what's your name are you married want to have dinner tonight is that your car can't you at least drop me off at Santa Monica and somethingorother street. I said NO NO and made sure I wasn't smiling.

Cathy Comenas

This Can't Be Happening

It was morning on Concord Court. The sun beat down on the small street and the Santa Ana winds blew Mrs. Thompson's wind chimes on her front porch. Mrs. Fay walked across the street to Mrs. Thompson's house and rang the door bell. Mrs. Thompson answered wearing a polka-dotted house dress that was green and yellow. She let Mrs. Fay in and led her to the dinning room which was in front of a large window facing the street. "Would you like some toast with your coffee this morning Mildred?"

Mildred was too busy looking out the window straining her neck to look at the house across the street. "Who's she got over there this time? This time whoever it is is driving a beat up Volkswagen."

Tilly set down the coffee cups and stood by the window. "What an eye sore that car is to this neighborhood."

She sat next to Mildred so she could watch the house across the street too. "It's really disgusting how open she is about having a woman lover. I can't believe her parents let her do such things. Last week it was some young Jewish girl in a Honda Civic."

Tilly had a mouth full of buttered toast. "This just can't be happening in our neighborhood. I just can't believe it."

Mildred was excited. Her voice became very high. "Look, here she comes. My oh my."

Tilly almost choked on her toast. "What the hell is that? Fishnet stockings, high heels and a top hat? Oh dear me. God save us."

Mildred was on the edge of her seat. "That, that girl has barely anything on. This is just too much."

Tilly put her glasses on. "Singing telegrams. It says right on

the back of her jacket. Look at that. Look at that. They're kissing right there in the middle of the street and they're laughing."

Mildred's eyes became glazed over as if she were dreaming. "My, this time it's an awful pretty one. She must be a foot taller than the little one. My she's sexy. I wonder what it is that she sees in this little one?"

"Mildred, I wonder if I should call the police. Should I call the police? Mildred?"

Mildred woke up. "Oh yes Tilly, something has got to be done about the way this little one carries on. There's children on this street. They have got to stop. It's not right."

"Look at the way the tall one is holding the little one. Look at that Mildred."

"I see it Tilly. She's biting her neck right in the middle of the street. No! Did you just see that? No no no. She just pinched the little one's behind."

Mildred and Tilly pressed their faces against the window to get a better look. Mildred held onto the curtain. "This is just too disgusting. Something has got to be done. This just can't be allowed."

Tilly jumped. "Was that a tongue I just saw?"

Mildred bumped into Tilly. "Where? Where?"

Tilly turned her back to the window and wiped the sweat from her forehead. "That's sick. Kids should be coming home from school soon. Boy if my husband were here he'd give those perverts a scare."

"Tilly look. There's the little one's mother. That will make them stop this."

"They're holding hands and the mother is smiling. She's laughing."

"The mother is always working and always laughing."

The mother drove off in her car and Tilly grabbed her coffee, bringing it to the window. "There they go again. I knew the minute the mother left they'd go right back to it. Who are they waving to like that?"

Mildred's face was pressed against the window. "Why I think they're waving to us."

"They can't be waving to us."

Mildred drew the curtains quickly, leaving Tilly's face still at the window in front of the curtain.

Stephanie Mark

The Shallow End

I sit in the bath and watch my left contact lens float toward the drain. It moves slowly, sometimes looking like a drop of water. Most of the time it looks like my lens. There it goes. Now it's gone.

Twice I felt like reaching for it, but I didn't. The first time it caught on some strands of red hair. I don't like hair in my eyes so I let it go. The second time I grabbed it, I let it go when I realized the juicy conversation Norman and I would have.

"You should be more careful with things that go in and around your eye, Nordis," he would say. "An eye is a precious thing." Norman is an optometrist.

"You should check on your wife when she's in a tub for so long." Hold it! I would never say that. I can never let him know I'm in here waiting for him to show some concern. Let him get the water bill.

I pour more bubbles and the water foams up to my neck. It's the bubble bath I got for Mother's Day, the pink kind that comes in a champagne-shaped bottle with gold foil around the neck. Paris Nights. It sits on the wicker shelf above the toilet next to a can of Raid Ant Spray.

If I were Katie, he would have checked on me in five minutes. Never leave a small child alone in a bath. When we first moved here, he insisted I buy those non-slip decals you put on the bottom of tubs. They were on my list of things to do, but we still had sheets hanging on the windows.

"Did you get them yet? I'm concerned about her slipping."

"I've looked for them," I lied, "but it's not exactly the kind of thing you find on a sale table."

Ten minutes later, he returned with a package of Donald Duck tub decals.

That night he shot a whole roll of film on Katie in this tub. He took pictures of her holding a blue plastic fish, some with her hair all bubbled up with shampoo, and one full body shot which is now pinned on the refrigerator with a magnet. It fell in the sink once while I was washing dishes so now it's kind of discolored. You can still tell she has blond hair.

"I don't understand how it could fall in the sink?" Norman said one day. "The sink and refrigerator are far apart."

It was the same tone of voice he used when I had to tell him I drove off with my purse on top of my car.

"How could you drive away with something that big on top of your car?" he asked. Then when he saw I was going to cry, he got that other kind of tone. "Okay, make a list of everything that was in your purse. Each credit card number and I'll call the banks."

At the top of my list I wrote "tampons." Norman stood fluttering the paper in his hands. "I don't get it, I just don't get it. Why is that more important than Visa?"

I watch an ant crawl out of a crack in the porcelain. It crawls toward the bar of soap. I really should call back that exterminator but I don't want to leave the house for a whole day. Last time, I went to the movies. Nobody ever speaks to me in the movies. But that day I was spoken to twice. I was asked to move my head.

I pour out the last of the bubbles so there's enough to cover my breasts. I hold the empty champagne bottle and think of New Year's Eve with Norman.

Black velvet and rhinestones. How often do I dress like that? Only to one of his office parties. Black velvet never lays flat on me. It protrudes, sticks out--doesn't seem soft anymore. And my necklace hung funny, sat on my chest like a trinket on a shelf. Suzanne, Norm's secretary had a dress that cooperated with her body. Hugged her flat on top. My body repelled the velvet like two opposite ends of a magnet. Twelve o'clock. Come on everybody, it's time. I struggled with my dress in a corner of the room. By the guacamole. Midnight. A horn blew, I turned my head. My dress tried to leap from my body. Dick Clark smiled, some glitter came

off my shoe, and Norman hugged Suzanne on the other side of the room. Happy New Year. I reached for a chip and the green dip stained the elbow of my black velvet dress. The next day I had it dry-cleaned and gave it to my sister to give to her maid.

That was a noise! Norman has finally come to check on me. Quietly I try to arrange my body in a nice position. How was Marilyn Monroe found? I settle for on my side with one arm flung over my breasts. I glance down to see how I look. One arm doesn't even begin to cover my breasts. They float to the surface like buoys. I try to drown them but they will not have it. I hold perfectly still and wait. I have left the door unlocked so Norman will have no problem bursting in with a look of concern in his eyes.

"Nordis! My god honey. You scared me. I was afraid you had slipped or something."

"How about a tuna sandwich but without any of that yucky celery that mommy puts on?" Norman says.

I realize the noise is only Norman opening the pantry. He must be in the kitchen with Katie. I have never heard him say "yucky" before. I don't like it. The ant crawls inside a bottle of shampoo. No More Tears Baby Shampoo. I put the cap back on. Norman is not going to come in here, I conclude. Then I conclude that Norman has a strong bladder. This is the only bathroom in the apartment.

Norman will have to come in here sometime, and when he does, he will find me sprawled out naked with everything drowned. Everything except my breasts. I slowly peel off a Donald Duck decal. I think about my pores being open from the steam and wonder if ants can crawl into open pores? My fingers are wrinkled like they used to get when I was little and never got out of the pool when my mother called.

My contact lens could be anywhere now. Anywhere in the New York sewer system. Katie will never need glasses or contacts. I'm certain of it. She has Norman's eyes. It's something they have in common, good eyes. She's too young to have them tested, but there won't be any problem. By four, I was already complaining of terrible headaches.

Katie and Norman. "Such a good father," my mother said after she was born. "You're lucky. Most men won't do things like that.

Things with diapers."

I yank off another duck decal. It is hard to yank underwater. It's a gentle yank in slow motion.

The bubbles are melted now which means I'm left looking at my breasts. This makes me uncomfortable, but at least they obstruct my stomach. That's one thing to be glad about.

"You look great, Nordis, you really do. But there's still a few things you can try. I'll get you that book, *A Flatter Stomach in Thirty Days*. Would you like that? I'll even diet with you if it will help. One way or another, we'll get those ten pounds off your stomach," Norman said after Katie was born.

"What happens after thirty days?" I had asked but Norman had bent over funny and put out his back. Norman is always putting out his back.

The next day I went to the market to get some fruits for a new diet I had read about. I wore the black boots that made my legs look slim. Pregnancy doesn't affect your legs. Two men kept looking at the cantaloupes and then over at me. I left immediately and went to the catfood section.

As I loaded cans of catfood into my cart I thought I heard someone say Puss n' Boots was a good brand. When I looked up, they were both staring at my legs. I turned sharply on my boot-heel and held up a can of Raid.

"Please repeat exactly what was said to you, Miss Spect," the store manager said and glanced at my wedding ring. His pen was poised as he fingered his tie.

I thought about it. "Cancel my complaint," I said politely and walked out.

"We can't help people like that if they won't cooperate," I thought I heard him whisper to the clerk-in-training.

On the way home, I honked at the car in front of me because it wouldn't go faster than 35 mph. When I sped past, I looked to see an elderly woman hunched over her steering wheel.

It was the first thing I told Norman when I got home. I felt my eyes go wet when I got to the part where I honked.

"So?" Norman asked when I reached the end of the story and described the woman's condition. "Then what happened?"

"That's it." I sobbed.

Norman shook his head, "Why are you always telling stories where nothing happens?"

I look at the waterproof clock that sits on the toilet to make sure I really have been in here for three hours. Time can be funny when you're immersed in an activity you enjoy. I'll give Norman another half hour to muster up his husbandly concern. I could moan. Do people moan when they're unconscious? I practice a moan silently in my head. If he's in the kitchen he'll never hear a moan. Especially a silent one.

I rub my eye and wonder whether my vision is cloudy from the steam or from losing my contact. I decide it's the steam and switch the tap from hot to cool. My legs are cramping but I know it can't be much longer. Any minute now he will look around and notice something is different, not quite right, missing. My stomach. Missing.

He will look at his watch with a start, leaving the mayonnaise uncapped and the tuna draining. "Nordis. Bath. Water. My god!" Katie will trail after him, complaining of sudden terrible headaches. Everyone in the building will be visibly shaken. Husbands will set egg-timers when their wives take baths. Just to be safe.

I pull off a third Donald Duck sticker and toss it in the toilet. It is a good shot from the tub. Norman and Katie play a similar game with a red sponge ball and a basket. I never play because I'm not a good shot.

I hear giggling and strain to listen over the running water. I turn the tap off so I can hear better.

"Another horsie ride for Katie Milady?" Norman speaks with a proper English accent. More giggles. I've never heard Norman use an accent before. I don't like it.

I picture Norman down on all fours, his wallet slipped from his shirt pocket, his hair sticking up because that's the first thing Katie grabs when she loses her balance.

I hear footsteps and realize I'm lying in an unattractive position. Somehow my thigh is twisted, causing it to bulge at the top. Not at all how Marilyn was found. I hope that Norman doesn't decide to bring in his camera. I imagine a picture of me hanging on the refrigerator with a magnet.

There is shy tapping. Norman would not tap shyly.

"Mommy, come here mommy! Daddy stopped going giddyup and I didn't even fall off yet. Come here mommy," she says through the closed door.

She is really putting sentences together well since I last talked to her.

It's only now I realize the water level has dropped to well below my knees. I think about Katie who is frightened and Norman whose back has gone out for the third time this month. I picture his sheepish smile. A hot bath is something that always soothes his back. Katie and I can shoot some baskets while we wait for him to feel better, I think, because I really am a pretty good shot. I look at my white terry cloth robe hanging on the hook. I will get up and tie it flatly against my chest. Then I will walk out of here toward Norman on the floor. I might even tousle Katie's hair. I will smile down at him, a cracked, chapped smile from three hours of water.

But before I do anything like that I remove my other contact, my right one, with a wrinkled finger. I watch it get caught in the whirlpool by the drain. It slides down with the last of the water, a loud gurgle. This is good because things that come in pairs should stay together.

G. N. Harris

Therapy Session

I never went for psychotherapy, though several people I've known have, some probably because of me, some at least partly. Last Tuesday I woke up with an ant in my ear. Lately I've been pretending to leave the apartment and instead hiding in a towel closet near the bathroom and listening to my girlfriend move about. Twice I heard her masturbate deliciously.

I close my eyes while driving on the freeway sometimes, and count. Once I got to eighteen. I like Jehovah's Witnesses coming to my door and sometimes invite them in, then disagree with everything they say. I flip channels looking for street fights and spontaneous, filmed violence and often find it. Policemen clubbing people is an especially prized clip.

I have sexually explicit dreams about people I know and never mention it to them. I am a consistent person—for three years I orgasmed every time I engaged in the sex act. I am living with a girl who wants me to move out. In the meantime, she gives me piano lessons.

I object to her jewelry. I don't like metal against the skin, mine or anyone else's. I've never understood why people must hang ornaments from their ears and drape chains around their necks. It's like the feeling of sweat you get in your palm when clutching a handful of pennies—very distasteful. She has one dull silver bracelet that particularly irks me and once I wouldn't let her touch me with it on.

I have never owned or fired a gun but now I am thinking of buying one. I saw an ad that sells them by mail order. Every night I wake up at exactly three-thirty and lie awake 'til exactly five

o'clock.

I've been following the career of a baseball player who has my name. He's a pitcher with a losing record. I had a job but I came to work barefoot and they fired me. I have had several good ideas to write on toilet walls lately but didn't have a pencil with me.

On Sundays I visit a friend who's in prison and sometimes pretend I'm a convicted killer and won't be going home. It's a different feeling then, when I leave. The girl I live with is unhappy that I decline all social invitations and still haven't met her parents. She invited them over last month and I went to a movie.

At the end of every day I read my horoscope to see how completely wrong it was. My mother believes in God and goes to church and prays for me and I wonder if prayers can work for atheists. The girl I live with is distressed that she has not met my mother.

This girl I live with tells everything to her psychotherapist. I know she talks about me. Often I imagine that he likes hearing about me. He probably knows by now that I have no money, she always reminds me of that fact.

I have one plate, one knife, one fork and one spoon, so I never have to wash dishes. People have much more than they need and work hard to earn money to buy more things they don't need. My girlfriend wants me to do that also. She has a full set of china stacked in the cabinet and mostly eats off paper plates.

I use coupons to buy food. Occasionally I lose a hundred dollars at the horse track. I never time my long distance calls. I was married and divorced once and sometimes the phone rings and nobody's there. I wonder if it's the kid, and I say her name lightly into the receiver but never hear anything.

I hate holidays, they're just promotional gimmicks with no feeling. This girl I mentioned gets emotional over the news but doesn't know what's happening in our neighborhood—I think it's a national symptom. We have a lot of sex and always argue immediately afterwards.

I press my ear to the thin walls of our apartment and I can hear the middle-aged man next door arguing with his sister on the telephone. Recently, I picked an extremely ugly girl up hitchhiking. She had looked okay from behind, walking with her thumb outstretched. I have no insurance on my car, as I don't believe in

accidents.

I went to college and experienced the entire range of the grade scale, A, B, C, D, E, F, I, W, S and U, before dropping out. During one fight, this girl I live with sprayed perfume all over me, some stuff I had bought her. I was stopped at the supermarket and asked to register for the election and replied, "I have never voted, and I'm proud of it."

My girlfriend says her psychotherapist never says a word. She complains I don't talk about things with her. I have a friend who is gay and pretends he isn't and we talk about the many women he has had. Yesterday I went for an interview and hoped, throughout it all, that I wouldn't get the job.

I evaluate every girl I see as my next possible companion, but I do not say a word to any one of them. I smash most bugs but let spiders go. When I hear the neighbor girl's high heels on the sidewalk I imagine forcing her into sex from behind. The girl I live with wears colored contact lenses and has blue eyes, brown eyes and green eyes.

I spend most of some days waiting for the mail. The other night I recorded my girlfriend in bed without her knowing. On the tape I have her moans and soft cries and then her demand that I move out. I used to be against war, but now I think I would be the first to volunteer in the event of one. After each psychotherapy session, my girlfriend puts a blanket over the window and lies down in darkness. I have never contemplated suicide. The lady downstairs takes in stray dogs and one barks constantly.

I have made several appointments to see new apartments and not shown up for any of them. The girl I live with has accused me of hating her family, whom I have never met. There is a neighbor who screams at his wife and every afternoon I sit and listen for his daily tirade. I calculated that my girlfriend spends over three hundred dollars a month on her psychotherapist. I have smashed a clock radio, kicked a hole in a door, torn several photographs and broken a chair during our disagreements. One late night we made furious love on the stairs outside our apartment. When a neighbor knocked yesterday, I watched him for awhile through the peephole but didn't answer. Neither of us has vacuumed the carpet since we moved in together. I learned one song on the piano and play it over and over. My girlfriend once stayed in the bathtub for an entire day.

She has had herself tested for AIDS, examined for breast cancer twice and on numerous occasions she assured me she was pregnant. I saw a classified ad that said "Will do anything for $3,000." I wrote and answered a personal ad from a single woman looking for a man. Recently I planned several errands, meetings and short trips, but sat still in my room all day instead.

I devised my own personal ad—Preying Mantis seeks edible mate for mutual devouring. My girlfriend always uses our assigned parking space and makes me park in the street. I wonder what her therapist would say about that.

I know what I would say to her therapist if I made an appointment. I would never do that, never waste money on a psychotherapist. But I know what I would say—that thanks to her treatments I have learned what is wrong with me. I know what else I would tell him. I would tell him it was none of his business, that he isn't entitled to eavesdrop on my life, that she doesn't need his advice and that he shouldn't encourage her to get rid of me. I know how I would do it, too. I'd do it by bursting in on them during her session. I've followed her and know where the office is. After all, it's almost like catching them in bed together. That's how I'd do it, I'd burst in with a gun and there'd be no more talking.

Kristina McHaddad

Red

Dana has watched a streetlight burn out every night for a month now. Every night.

Each time the blue-white light shoots quickly into fire bright light and then fades slowly down into the black night.

She is beginning to worry.

Usually she is driving alone late at night. It is the sudden break of bright light as the bulb bursts that catches her eye just quickly enough to watch the lamp burn out.

Occasionally she is driving with someone else and she starts at the sight and calls out Did you see? but they never do (not even Laine).

It is not that she doubts herself or what she is seeing. But she wonders all the same. She fights an urge to track down each individual light the next night to see whether it has been replaced.

Laine is a poet. She writes of James Dean, of smoking in bathtubs, of catching houses on fire. Dana still writes of sunsets and oceans, but she's working on it.

Both Dana and Laine think that they are in love with their writing professor but they talk about it with one another as though they are not. They only admire her greatly, want to write like her, look like her, have her life although they have no idea of what her life might be, to be her.

Laine writes a poem and shows it to the professor, a poem describing two women who are bound together by the length of a telephone wire, two lives mirroring and echoing one another, talking each other through something. The teacher knows and Dana knows.

Dana too writes a poem. She shows it to her instructor only with an explanation that the words have no meaning, that this woman is only a catalyst for the words. Dana's teacher says, "It is fine that you write poems about me, but you are not to fall in love with me and do not send the poems in Valentine's Day cards."

So much for the disclaimer, Dana thinks.

Dana takes the glasses from her small face and cleans them against the white t-shirt, pulled from the waist of her Levi's. She waits for class to start. She slips the glasses back to her pale eyes and holds her short blond hair up with one hand away from the back of her neck and heat of the room.

She has been wearing glasses now for about three months off and on. Not prescription glasses. Actually the lenses are only clear plastic set into clear plastic frames. She wears them because they so significantly alter her physical appearance. She feels quite different from herself when she wears them.

But lately she has begun to worry about her eyesight, fearing that imperfections in the lenses might damage her eyes. She finds it difficult to remember to keep the lenses clean, thinking that the spots and blurriness are on her eyes rather than the plastic. And she's not sure whether she exists more with the glasses or without them.

Laine walks into the classroom only a minute after the instructor enters, but enough to be noticed. She slides into the seat next to Dana and acknowledges her through dark shoulder-length hair which falls into her brown eyes. She drops her books onto the floor at her feet and stretches her legs out onto the seat of the desk in front of her.

Laine spends much of the hour sketching in her books—boys' faces, strange scenes, self-portraits.

And Dana, shifting uncomfortably in her seat, watches Laine. Dana feels the desk growing smaller around her. The air is unreasonably hot, unbearably humid. The room is stuffy and too brightly lit by overhead florescent lights in parallel rows. Open windows high up on the walls pull in cooler air from outside only to have the room warm it and weigh it down.

Dana looks up to find Laine watching her.

Laine points to Dana's white tennis shoes and then to her own red high-top sneakers. "Maybe if we take them off," she suggests

in a whisper and a grin.

And so they do, but it doesn't help much.

Laine leaves class early.

It might have been Laine who first told Dana that the way to cut yourself was along the vein rather than across it; but Dana doesn't think so. Dana's known this fact forever and they haven't known each other long enough.

But it was Laine who told her that often times suicides begin to smoke cigarettes right before they kill themselves, sometimes even before they consciously decide to do it. She says that it is possible to trace the last movements of a suicide by tracking a trail of cigarette butts, the place of death marked by a pile of butts and ashes.

Laine, who smokes all the time, says people should begin to worry when she stops smoking.

It is Valentine's Day and the assignment is a writing exercise, a free association with the word red. Dana thinks, not roses, not hearts, not clowns. She looks down and sees Laine's shoes. Red. Red fingernail polish on short, bitten-down nails, a red pro-choice button, a Laurie Anderson t-shirt. And so from shoes to nails to lipstick to blood to. Stop.

She can't read it aloud, can't turn in the assignment at all.

It is late. She needs to be at work in five minutes and it will take twenty minutes to get there from here. She is standing in the stairwell between classes talking with Laine. Talking with Laine about what. Sometimes, even during their conversations, she is not sure what they are talking about. And she is deathly afraid to admit that she does not know a great deal of what she is sure that Laine thinks she knows.

Later, on her way to work, Dana listens back and hears Laine put into words things Dana was only partially thought, considered in unorganized bits and pieces. She thinks she does not know but they are really Dana's own thoughts all along.

They're walking that telephone wire.

It is hot and stifling in her room tonight. Her window is open as far as possible. Blankets and sheets from the bed mound on the

floor. Her body twists against her clothing.

It is all so real. The face is blue and swollen and so very still. She sees it first, before anyone else. She is inside a small dark room and thinks that it must be light outside.

Dana jerks awake, sweating and chilled, drenched cloth sticking to her cold skin. Three o'clock in the morning. She fights not to dial Laine's number.

It's only a dream. Remember.

The next day she sees Laine and she's still smoking.

Dana thinks, powerlessness is not when your own life is beyond your control; it's when you can't save someone else.

Laine pulls a thick manuscript from her backpack, white pages bound between two blue covers.

"Here," she says. "This is the final project for my screenwriting class. I want you to read it. I want to see what you think."

Me? "Sure, I'd love to." Doesn't she know I still don't know?

"Call me after finals and we'll get together for coffee, okay?"

"Yeah." Haven't they done that before, coffee or something? Seems like there must have been something; but, no, there is only this.

At first, Dana is too eager to read the script. She keeps it close by the side of her bed, waits for the perfect time to give it her undivided attention, the pages and Laine.

They see each other a couple of weeks later at a reading where their poetry professor is performing. They talk for a moment in passing, other people to attend to. They discuss how their teacher has remained remarkable but has somehow lost her immortality over the last month. Perspective (either way) is gained by distance.

Dana apologizes for not having called. Laine understands. They say goodbye and promise.

Dana knows that it will be a year later and much too late. Laine will have probably moved (Dana already has). Laine will probably not remember giving Dana the script. Probably won't remember. Probably won't.

Dana will have misplaced the manuscript anyway.

Janice Pocengal

The Guy I'm After

Frank, who lived upstairs, and I, decided to take the television tubes to the drugstore to test them out on the tube testing machine that I had seen behind the magazine racks. We had emptied the t.v. of its tubes when, one day, we were flipping channels, and the screen went back to green and the sound still played. We put the tubes in a brown bag and I noticed there were different numbers and letters marked on the top of each one, and the television seemed to lose some of its charm.

Frank helped me do it because he was locked out of his house and it was too cold to stay outside so he asked me if he could please come in for a while, and said that his roommate should be home soon.

"The one who plays Mozart on the piano?" I asked.

He said yes, and then I described his appearance to Frank, and Frank described him back to me differently and then I agreed with Frank's description of him because I figured he knew him better.

"Don't you have a key," I said, and he said, "No. I forgot them, they're upstairs." Then we both agreed that it was best to check with the neighbors when something like this happened because sometimes they knew how to get in your house when you didn't.

We decided to watch some television and I apologized for the furniture and Frank didn't seem to mind when I straightened the table cloth that covered holes in the sofa before he sat down. I explained to him that it was a sofa bed, a good one, that often people stayed over and it beat the floor. It was free I told him and so heavy it took four people to move it.

Frank rubbed his hand along the tweed covered arm and the exposed wood at the end then he wrapped his coat more tightly

around him and looked into the television.

A while later when we didn't like the video that was on I said, "Does your heater work? Ours leaks gas and the whole house smells after you turn it on and you can fall asleep quickly if you lie next to it while watching television." When Frank didn't reply I said, "asphyxiation," and that was when the screen on the television went blank.

While Frank messed with the television I went into the kitchen to clean up the leftovers of a cake that was chopped into pieces but not eaten. It was white with yellow and peach colored bells and the words were all chopped so that you couldn't read them but it had said, "Congratulations Nola and Phil." I scraped one of the flowers off with my finger, the cake was hard and spongy, and if there had been a dog around I would have fed it to him because dogs like it when you do that sort of thing.

I wanted to know if Frank had a dog but he walked in with a television tube and said, "You got a knife?"

It had frosting on it but I gave him the one for the cake. Then I put the cake in the trash that was already overflowing and asked Frank if he wanted any help; he said no that he used to be a television repairman before he became an astronomy professor and that he thought the television could be saved.

Underneath our building was a basement, a large basement, large enough for a boat, and it was painted with designs, pictures of children and a map of the world. I hadn't gone down there often but that was where Phil had gotten the money for the rent last month. He had sold Frank's boat. Shortly after that, one day outside, I almost sold Frank's rudder when Frank approached and asked how much.

"Five dollars," I said, "or best." Then he told me it was his rudder from his stolen boat so I gave it to him and he took it to his apartment upstairs. I stayed outside, with some friends selling everything else that had accumulated in the basement for the last five years since the landlord said he was bringing a truck to haul it away. That day I made sixty dollars selling things that didn't belong to me.

On the evening of the day that we dismantled the television set, Phil came home. It was the first time since we were married. But

it was late and he crawled in through the bedroom window. I stood in the hallway deciding whether to run or to stay and try to identify the outline of a man with his arms outstretched, clinging in the dark to the sides of the window, his feet on the sill. I ran and went out the back door and was outside when I looked back and saw Phil through the broken backdoor window. It was held together with masking tape. When I came back inside Phil asked if I had seen his black loafers.

Music by Mozart had begun to play upstairs and I made coffee in my pajamas and used paper towels because there were no filters and listened to Phil rummage through the room looking for shoes.

"They smelled like garlic," I said, and the water started to boil over, then the paper towels had torn because they were the generic kind. The coffee came out with a texture like I imagined those plastic Christmas scenes would have if you tasted them. The ones you turn upside down and shake where the snow flutters around the house and the reindeer, in the water.

"Phil," I said when he had come back looking like someone was to blame, "when you go to buy cigarettes can you pick up some M&M's for me?"

"Any calls?" he said, but I had decided to take a bath and was already in the bathroom where I could pretend not to hear. The bathroom had looked great that night because early in the morning I washed the mildew off the ceiling with ammonia and bleach. I sat in the bathtub, a thick piece of wood lay across the top of the tub, and that's where I put my book when I stopped reading and went underwater.

I liked my name because it was different. Sometimes people said Lola by mistake, they called me "No," sometimes, but I didn't mind. But Phil calls himself Phil because no one can pronounce his name. He has large hands, basketball hands he says, because he played a lot when he was younger. His hands became flatter and wilder. He says that sometimes he didn't know who he really was. That was when he was serious, but the rest of the time it was hard to tell.

The telephone was ringing when I got out of the tub, but I didn't try to answer it. I dried off slowly and opened the window when a

cool blast of air sucked in, making the door that I thought was already closed, slam shut. I opened it and went into the hallway.

"Did you bring M&M's?" I asked Phil. He was putting together some things.

"Going to Tahoe," he said. Then I dried my hair and tried out my other roommate's hairspray. It came in a gigantic can and the nozzle broke off before I got a chance to spray it. The can was still full, but it was bound to break, I figured, before anyone could use that much hairspray. Then I ate the M&M's.

When I called to talk to some friends at work they said, "Get a divorce. It's the only possible way." Since the television was broken I sat with them at a bar and drank coffee one night, then another and another. The next time Phil came home he slept on the floor by the heater. He turned it on and the house smelled like gas and I called the landlord the next day and told him he better remove the heater.

One day I sat on the front porch with Frank. The television wasn't working but the tubes had not been tested yet. And I told him about the people next door. They were blind, but only functionally blind or something, I wasn't sure. We watched the woman climb the stairs and I had the feeling she saw us behind the dark glasses that she wore. They had shades on their windows but I could often see them through the partially open shade in the kitchen. The light would shine yellow and I watched the shadows of the two elderly people, I imagined they were married, and it was nice to know they watched me. I had seen them at night when the lights in my room were on.

Then Frank said that one of his neighbors stacked their shoes at the entry way at the foot of the stairs, he didn't know why. There were thongs, tennis shoes and high heels, Frank said. All lined up. Then before he went upstairs, at his house, he took his shoes off too, thinking it would be best. Frank wore an expensive looking jacket, all lined with fur, although it wasn't really leather he said, he'd "hate to kill an animal." On his feet he wore Birkenstocks, and he's letting his flat-top grow out since now he says that he's looking for work.

"My husband," I told him, "doesn't know who he is. It all started when he was fourteen and he thinks he'll never find out."

We both looked down the street. Nothing was different. Then Frank showed me his motorcycle, it looked like others I had seen, and he got on it and went to work.

When Phil and I married there were no pictures because the camera jammed and all the pictures got exposed on the same frame. That's what my friend who took the pictures said later so I had nothing to look back on. Phil said it's better that we just remember, we don't have to see.

One day after Phil had left, I stopped to rest on a park bench. A man walking slowly approached and said, "How far can you see." I didn't usually rest on park benches because when no one was around, just the tall trees, it always felt like something was about to happen. I said, "Pretty far," and began walking. I was near-sighted. I wore contact lenses. He wouldn't have known if I lied or told the truth and I wondered what he thought when I said that. The park was creepy and I walked quickly. It was starting to mist and I could hear the cars on the street but I was surrounded by trees. I wanted to see the street.

The day Phil left he had had the entire room torn apart. He said he was taking only what he needed. I sat in the window watching him. I'd hold on to the window and lean out as far as I could, my legs still in the room. Phil still couldn't find his black shoes.

"Will you paint when I'm gone?" he asked me.

"You just got a ticket," I said. He had parked his car on the sidewalk again.

Frank called me last night and said we could go and test the television tubes the next day. I told him that's good because it's about the time we had it fixed, it's like staring at an empty box. He asked if the tubes were still in the bag. I said that they were and he said "don't break them," that some of them still might be good, you never can tell.

So now I call Phil's sister because I decide to return her pan but there is no answer. Phil must be on his way to Egypt, and I don't think he's coming back.

The night before, a woman with an elastic necked dress edged with lace, showed a tremendous amount of cleavage when she bent

to take our orders at the restaurant. I had the carbonara, one of my friends from work had the primavera. The sauce was too salty.

"Why did we come here? I knew we shouldn't," I said. There was spaghetti on the floor in the entry way and the waitress smiled while she picked up the strands with a napkin she had found under a chair. We drank room temperature red wine. There were juke boxes on each table and it reminded me of a truck stop I had been to that had telephones for all the drivers. They were in the booths along the wall and when you sat there erroneously and the waitress and the truck drivers knew you weren't a truck driver, it made you want to apologize and say that you didn't know. But that would never be enough. They'd watch you when your food came and when you went out of the restaurant. The windows would be shining and clear. The bathrooms would smell like disinfectant, and there would be a woman two stalls down, who knew better than to sit in the area for truck drivers. She would be complaining to someone that there were no toilet seat covers.

But this waitress didn't stare, she kept smiling and brought more wine.

Phil's not Italian but he can cook anything. He breaks and turns eggs with one hand, tosses linguini by flipping his wrist. The second to the last time I saw him he wore a hat, a white pleated hat that puffs up on his head and makes his hair go straight where the band flattens it. He used to say that when he finds out what he wanted he wouldn't cook anymore.

If I knew what I wanted, I'd tell Phil, I always thought. But he'd say, "Listen to me, listen to me," and go on about something.

The telephone bill hangs on the refrigerator by a magnet shaped like a carrot. I circled all the calls that were mine. Now I'm not sure if the pan belongs to Phil's sister, I could be wrong, it could be ours. I wish Frank were home so I call him, and he is home, and we decide to go have a drink somewhere.

We go to this bar I know of and we sit in the booths. The whole place is set up diner style, formica table tops, a dirty floor and booths in different colors.

I said, "Frank, did you get a job yet?"

He said yes that he did but only part time.

We both look around the room and watch the people. I ordered

gin because it sounded right. But they do have almost every kind of beer you could want and some good ones on tap. Across the room, on the other side of the bar are the pool tables. I haven't played in a while, so Frank and I go mark our names down on the chalkboard and wait.

"I come here for the people," I tell Frank. "No one dresses in anything they wouldn't wear on a regular day running errands. It's very cool. Lots of black."

Frank thinks it would have been cooler if we had taken his motorcycle, I know that's what he's thinking, but he's too polite to say it. He's not from this area. Besides the tubes are in the back seat of my car and we might want to stop to fix the television.

I decide that I like this bar. We talk to people from different places. I win a game at pool. Only one. So I break and then it's the next person's turn. It's a cool place. I decide that I will come here to apply for a job the next day. It will be great working here in the evenings. When we leave I remember that I forgot to tell Frank about his boat, but then there's a lot of things that Frank doesn't know.

Glenn Dwiggins

Us in Yosemite

My friend, Andrew, is talking to me. He is telling me how beautiful the view is from on top of Half Dome, when the sky clears in the winter, even if only for a little while; he is saying how cold the wind blows now and then, and how hot the sun can be when the wind is not blowing. He is wanting to show me once more how high one can get just by breathing in the thin, cold air, real deep, and is sorry he can't. He is really only telling me how he died.

I already know about Half Dome, the half smooth, half jagged, half yellow-white, half orange-gray beast of a stone set awkwardly on a stony mountain, and about the wind, which comes rushing up either side, or up both at the same time. I have been on top and looked out over the countryside at the whites on dark greens on browns below the tree line and, the whites on angry yellows, peaches and oranges, like a fire burning, above it. When all was still and the sun shone above me, I sweated under layers of clothing, but then they quickly became insufficient when the icy wind blew up under my down parka, and the sweat felt like it was going to freeze solid on my back. I also know about the temptation to jump from that height, which seems so close to heaven, and expecting to land safely on one of the lower clouds. I figure it to be the lack of oxygen that gets to the head and makes one feel that way. The temptation is never very strong, and is easy to keep under control. You just look down for a second. Fear takes over. Everybody who has been up here knows about that.

I know a lot about my friend, too, although I thought I knew more than I really do. What I have always known about him I see now as clearly as I do the wispy, twisted center of an old marble, somewhat obscured by discolored, chipped glass, clouded by what I know about him now. I remember him to have been the first to say, "You and I are going climbing in Yosemite."

And we went.

At the time I was between jobs, between academic stages, between certainty and uncertainty about what I was going to do with myself, between girlfriends...between a lot of things. Andrew always seemed to be between beers. By that I don't mean to say he was a heavy drinker or anything; I just mean that what concerned him most was where he was to get his next high, chemically or otherwise, and the best (meaning most convenient and cheapest) way for the both of us was found at the nearest pub. I guess it may be better to say that he was always between highs, but then, maybe not. Anyway, the truest, best high, for him and me both, came from actual physical height, although at this moment, I don't feel it. I feel only the wind's chill paralyzing parts of my face; I see only the rocky cliffs, mountains, and waterfalls surrounding my oddly-shaped pedestal; I hear only the wind's howl, like an old Indian woman's singing, and I hear Andrew, talking to me.

After that trip, I went to college, and he went to work in construction. I dated some of the girls in my classes, with some luck, and he tried dating both sexes, "with equal luck," he wrote me, "but the women were better to deal with in the morning, for the most part...maybe that's a sign that I was meant to be straight."

That part, about being "meant to be straight," was a joke we shared. I knew how Andrew felt about destiny, and that in no way would he accept his being "meant" for anything, like to be straight. He was more like the center of that marble: twisted and obscure, and to get at the core, it seemed like you had to break a fragile surrounding field around it, which was easily done. You just got him high, one way or another. Then he was your friend, like it or not.

I have a snapshot of us, standing together on top of Half Dome. I took it with one of those cameras that has a timer built in. I brought the camera. It was my job to think ahead. In the picture, we are standing buck naked with our backsides to the camera. We are looking over our left shoulders at something in the distance. In the background are the surrounding rocks, covered with snow, and the orange light of the sunset makes it look like it's on fire. I had placed a piece of white labeling tape over our butts and scribbled the words

"Us in Yosemite" on it. I brought it with me when I visited Andrew one weekend and showed it to him when we both were rolling drunk off of Lucky Lager and couldn't figure out the picture-puzzles on the underside of the bottle caps. We were already laughing about our stupidity, when I showed him the photo. We rolled around some more, making "butt-cold" jokes and laughing about if we had died there and been found like that, until his face became very dim and serious, and he said, "Do you ever wonder what it's really like to freeze to death?"

I know about climbing, too, the constant scratch, scrape, squeak, grunt, creak, the breaking grips, the sliding boots, the falling gravel, the tight rope. We never much went climbing for the climbing, though. For us it was the being at the top that made the trip worthwhile. We climbed up Half Dome as quickly as we could, Andrew in the lead, taking all the risks, and me, close behind, pretending to take the same ones. When we reached the top, the sun was overhead, and everything was bright. I had to squint at the snowy glare as I reached for my sunglasses. Andrew didn't bring his, so he just squinted. I swear that that day on top of Half Dome deformed his face for the rest of his life. I may be wrong. At any rate, something up there changed him, and maybe me, too. Maybe it was the combination of the beer and thin, cold, dry air that made my lips, nose, and ears hurt. Whatever it was, the expression on his face made him look like he was making the last steps towards a major discovery. Except when he laughed, which he did quite often after the third nearly-frozen Lucky Lager he pulled out of his pack. I smiled and sipped the gin 'n tonic out of my bota sack. Our trips were always BYOB, and I figured gin 'n tonic would be more appropriate. As we sat there, I wished that I had brought beer. My drink was flat.

I got out my camera, and began to adjust it for light, distance, lens angle. I looked through the aperture at the mountains around me. I focused on El Capitan, with its flat, snow-covered plateau, as smooth as it was jagged. Andrew's hand blocked the lens. "You can get that picture at a souvenir shop...probably a better one," he said. "I have a better idea. Take off your clothes."

I said, "And freeze to death?"

He said, "Not quite," and started to strip.

There's something about standing naked on top of Half Dome,

skin turning pale and bluish in the cold air, us shivering, but not wanting to get dressed. I imagined someone watching us with those twenty-five cent telescopes set up at an observation point. Some old businessman saying, c'mere, Madge, look at these fools, wasting his whole quarter's time, trying to figure us out. Were we drunk, or maybe half insane. Whatever we were, we were ruining his vacation, and then his time runs out, and all goes black.

"You know you are freezing to death when you start to feel real warm and comfortable," said Andrew. I didn't feel at all warm yet, and my feet hurt. We got dressed.

It was then, as my skin was warming under my clothes, that I first felt that high, and everything seemed so near. I felt as if I could reach out and touch El Capitan, and scoop some of the whipped cream snow off the top and eat it. The ground below was only a few feet down, and there was a soft, white cushion besides.

Andrew yodeled. The yodel echoed back.

Shadows are quickly running up the sides of Half Dome, silently climbing up where I so noisily struggled some hours ago. The sun has gone from a bright yellow-white to a deeper orange color, and is headed west. It is also getting much colder, even when the air is still. I should head back down if I want to get home before dark. I am out of beer anyway.

On the face of Half Dome is a narrow ledge, about five feet down from the top, where people had climbed down and stood on it and scrawled their names with a small stone. I climb down it now. Under the words, "Tarzan and Jane did it on top of Half Dome, 8/5/'79," is what Andrew wrote there. It says, "And Andrew and Rod cleaned up afterwards, 8/9/'79." I remember us laughing about that for two minutes. Under that is some writing that I hadn't seen before. It says, "I am drunk and I feel warm. Andrew again, 8/9/85." I pick up the much-used rock and write, "I am going home. Rod, 8/10/'86."

As I read this now and think of him and what happened, I remember when his family called to tell me the when, the how, the where, and to ask me if I knew the why. I told them I didn't know. I don't know, even now, if he did it on purpose. Somehow I don't believe it. I think what convinces me was in the way he looked at me when he talked about death.

I wonder if anyone had been watching him then, or if every-

thing went black too soon, as the time ran out.

The sky was turning a deeper blue, and our shadows were getting longer, when I said, "Let's go home," and squeezed the last drops of my gin 'n tonic into my mouth. It was bitter.

"That's fine by me," he said, and started gathering together the empty Lucky Lager bottles and caps and stuffing them into his pack. He moved slowly, like a child, not wanting to leave, taking his time, delaying the inevitable. "I'm out of beer anyway," he said.

The slip, grab, slide, step, shudder of the climb down was sometimes easier, sometimes more difficult than the trip up. Andrew led the way, as usual, and sometimes fine gravel, loosened by my boots, would fall on his head.

"I have an idea. Why don't we just jump from here?" he said.

We laughed. I held on tighter.

Andrew is telling me all these things. I am looking one last time from the very peak of Half Dome, at Yosemite. I look down, and a sharp shock of fear runs through me, and I have to step back. I kick some gravel loose, and it falls silently over the edge. I am suddenly very cold. I have to move to get warm. I climb down, moving nervously and quickly, kicking loose lots of gravel and rocks, that rattle and slide roughly down the mountainside.

Andrew is joking with me. He is saying, why don't we jump from here. Or maybe we should stay here and freeze to death. You get real warm and comfortable.

I am not listening. I am climbing down, scraping against the rocky mountainside. A breeze blows up the face of it, up and under my jacket. I shiver.

A picture comes into my head. It is the picture, "Us in Yosemite." Andrew, naked, is pointing out over the edge of Half Dome, and looks very happy about something. I, also naked, am following his finger with my eyes, but look like I am confused about the same thing. We look like we are surrounded by a huge fire.

Our flesh is pale in the sunlight, but our butts' whiteness still stands out, as if they were lit from within.

As my boot dislodges a rock from the side of Half Dome, I try my best to suppress a laugh.

Mona Houghton

Trapped in the Heart

Lily and Hank

Lily opened her eyes. The shadows on the pull down shade that covered the glass front door loomed over her, like they did every night. Roses that were red in the day, camellias that were pink, now the bright flood light along the path of the courtyard apartments magnified the parts, reduced them to dark, distinct shapes, each leaf, each petal.

Lily glanced at the clock on the floor. 2:18 AM. She looked back at the door. Three minutes later Hank's shadow joined the others. She watched as he raised his arm and softly tapped his knuckles against the glass.

Lily got up and opened the door as wide as it would go, without undoing the chain. "Hi, Hank."

"Open up," he said.

"Why?" Lily asked.

"So I can come in there and drown myself in those big bosoms of yours, that's why," Hank said.

Lily could smell him, the beer on his breath, the stale sweat coming through cheap after-shave. It turned her on.

Hank leaned up against the door frame. Lily reached out and ran her fingers up and down the front of his pants. He grabbed her hand and held it tight up against himself.

"Open up," Hank said, "and you can have it all."

After giving him a squeeze, Lily pulled her hand back and undid the chain.

Lily and Hank had known each other a long time, but the kind of knowing had changed almost a year before, after a Christmas

party where they both had happened to turn up. It was a big party. Lily had come alone. She had planned to leave alone, but her car wouldn't start. Someone had told her Hank always carried a set of jumper cables. She had found him in the kitchen working on a bottle of vodka, and he would have been glad to help except his cousin had borrowed his cables earlier that day. Hank offered her a lift home. Lily accepted the ride, but she didn't want to go home. She wanted to go to church to hear the singing. Hank had shrugged. He had thought midnight mass would be a gas. They had left the party together. That had been the beginning.

Hank kicked the door closed after he came into the room. Lily slinked around behind him and slipped the chain back into place.

"You locking me in or locking them out?" Hank pulled his sweat shirt up over his head.

Lily didn't answer. She never did. She never said a word once Hank actually came into her room, not until much later. Oh, occasionally a whisper would escape, something that would let him know how much she wanted him, but that didn't count, not to Lily and not to Hank, because it was as much a part of the loving as any kiss or caress. Afterwards, though, Lily couldn't shut up.

But before Lily started talking, she'd leave Hank in bed wrapped up in the sheets and the blankets and run a bath that had almost no cold water in it at all. If any sample bubble bath had come through the mail she'd throw that in too. And while the tub filled up, Lily would set out a big soft towel and lather up a wash cloth with Ivory soap and pour them each a shot of something strong. Then, when everything was just right, Lily would go get Hank out of bed. He'd usually be asleep, but she would wake him up anyway, gently. With her teeth, she would nibble on his side, or she would tickle his eye lids with the tip of her tongue.

Hank never minded being awakened. He loved Lily's baths. He liked the way she guided him through the darkened room and the way the bottom of his feet wanted to run away when they hit the cold linoleum on the bathroom floor and the way he kind of ached up inside and tingled at the same time when he lowered himself into the almost too hot water.

Once Hank settled in, that was when Lily would start. She would kneel down beside the tub and in the dark she would wash

Hank and tell him a story, give him a piece of her self, a beginning and a middle and an end. As far as Hank could remember, Lily had never repeated herself, not in the nine months since they had been seeing each other. And except for the first two times they spent together, that being Christmas Eve and New Year's Day, the routine had never varied.

This night Lily said, "Lean forward."

Hank did as she asked and Lily started to wash his back.

Christmas Eve--New Year's Day

Lily had done some research earlier in the morning. She had found out the Catholics over in Taft had the biggest choir around, so once she convinced Hank she should be the one behind the wheel, that she hadn't had much to drink, Lily pointed his pick-up truck north into the desert and drove out of Maricopa on highway 33.

A silver moon sat over on the horizon to the west. The stars were bright and the Joshua trees stood out, silent and still. To Lily, the party, the music and the voices and the blinking lights strung up around each room, didn't seem like part of the same evening, not now. She glanced over at Hank.

He smiled and said, "Not often I let somebody drive my truck."

"I'm honored," said Lily.

"I'm drunk," Hank said. "I'm drunk and I'm going to church." He laughed and gave Lily a sidelong glance. "I'm cold, too." He explained about the heater being broken as he snuggled up against her.

The night air did hold enough chill to make the move logical. It surprised them both, though, when that wanting feeling came through, wild like a March hare. There had been an attraction, but the being close opened it up into something bigger. Lily took deep, calming breaths and kept her eyes on the white line and pretended she didn't feel Hank pressing his thigh tight to hers. She didn't want it to go too fast.

When they walked into the church Hank giggled a little, but Lily's icy response made him keep his opinion to himself. She enjoyed being in church. The formality absorbed her. She had always wished she could discover the comfort in religion that she

guessed real church-goers experienced. With all the Christmas fanfare Lily could actually feel like the man in the white robes in front of the alter represented a conduit between herself and some pure and hypnotic state. But these sensations didn't last long. She'd glance over at Hank and before she knew it some other idea of ecstasy pumped through her mind, and the images were not powder puff voids, they were concrete and luscious. Still, that night, with the booming organ music and the big voices in the choir, Lily did tie in to the clean feeling of sinlessness.

After the final blessing, Lily and Hank headed for home. It was late and the moon had set and they were both silent as they traveled through the dark desert. By the time they got to Maricopa the town had closed down. Someone had even turned off the green neon sign above the Shamrock Bar and Grill.

When Lily saw this she said, "That's a first."

Hank said, "You should stay out late more often."

Lily said, "You'd be surprised."

"Would I?" Hank asked.

Lily nodded.

She drove straight to the Courtyard Arms, the bungalow style apartments where she rented the smallest unit available. She pulled the truck into the spot where she usually parked. She said, "I have some tequila in the freezer."

Hank said, "Good."

Contrary to his expectations, though, Hank only heard a story on Christmas Eve. What Hank did not know, and never really would, was that what he heard that night was Lily's first story. In it, Lily told about her dog and how he got the name Sidewinder.

Hank liked the story. He laughed a lot, especially at the end.

Lily poured them each another shot of tequila. She said, "About four years later old Sidewinder got hit by a train." Lily stared off and kind of shook her head. "Funny how a person can feel about a dog."

"Yeah." Hank moved from the chair to the couch and sat down next to Lily. He put his arm around her, but Lily kind of scooted away. "Come on, honey," he said.

But Lily wouldn't have any of it, not then.

She let Hank spend the night, but they both slept in their

clothes.

For the next seven days Hank couldn't keep his mind on much else but Lily. He wanted her in the worst way. He felt mesmerized. He kept replaying that night in her apartment over and over again, in his head, the way she sat in the dim light talking about that dog, the way she wrapped her hand around the neck of the tequila bottle and gripped it until her fingers turned white before she poured, the way their bodies fit together even with the jeans and the slacks and the turtle necked sweaters. Lily confused him.

Hank tried to reach Lily. She never seemed to be around when he dropped by her apartment or telephoned. He left a note thumb tacked to her door. She never got back to him. By New Year's Eve, Hank gave up on Lily. He got drunk by himself and went to bed early.

The next day while Hank was sipping beer and watching the Rose Bowl game he suddenly felt like he was not alone. He looked up. Lily was standing outside the screen door staring in at him.

Hank said, "Where have you been?"

Lily didn't say anything.

Hank said, "Come on in."

Lily opened the screen door and let it flap closed behind her.

Hank stood up and stepped over the coffee table. "Are you okay?" he asked, as he moved close to her.

Lily nodded.

Hank reached out and touched her hair.

Lily put her index finger on the metal button on Hank's jeans.

Hank and Lily made love right then, right there on the throw rug in front of the television while Sam the Bam Cunningham made football history with his fourth goal of the game.

Afterwards, Lily held Hank close and watched the sun play the leaves of the pepper tree outside the front door.

Hank and Lily

Initially Hank tried to be conventional. He called Lily and asked her out to dinner.

She said, "I'd rather not. But why don't you drop by after you've eaten."

So Hank ate dinner by himself, then drove over to Lily's place. He knocked on the door. Lily only opened it as wide as the chain

lock would permit.

"Hello, Hank," she said.

Hank thought maybe it would be nice to go out for a drink so he asked her if she'd like to walk down to the Shamrock. They had a new group coming in that night.

"You go on alone," Lily said, "And then come back, later." She smiled.

Hank wasn't one to insist on doing things his way, so he followed Lily's leads. It seemed she had a definite plan in mind.

By the beginning of February their internal clocks were in sync. Hank would be out there in the dark, after midnight, three, sometimes four nights a week, knocking on the door. Lily would always let him in. They would make love and Lily would give him a bath and tell him a story. In ways, Hank had never felt so complete. The loving mystified him. It took Hank outside himself into a light he had never before seen. He spoke about it, a blue green forever. Lily enveloped him. Her body always stayed with Hank, the touch, the smells, and her voice, somehow she made the words wrap around him.

Lily said, "Lean forward."

Hank did as she asked and Lily started to wash his back. She rubbed the sudsy cloth up and down his sides and around his neck and behind his ears. A gentle nudge encouraged him to rest his back against the cool porcelain tub. Lily reached under the water. She ran the washcloth between his toes and up his legs and she started to tell her story. What Hank did not know, and would never really understand, was that he was hearing Lily's last story. Init, Lily told about the woman who had no bottom lip.

Hank didn't laugh at the end. Instead he asked Lily for another shot of Tequila.

A couple of nights later when Hank knocked on the door, Lily never opened it up. His senses told him she was in there. He knocked louder. He felt cheated. He felt betrayed.

He came back the next night. He had started drinking early and had been drinking hard. He knocked. Nothing happened. With his fist Hank pounded on the door.

From inside, from the bed, Lily watched the shadow on the pull down shade. She couldn't move. She couldn't get up. She couldn't

let him in.

Hank hurt. He yelled out Lily's name.

Lily's first and last stories

Originally the dog had been called Bert, short for Fierce Albert. Bert was seven years old when Lily was born. When Bert was fourteen, he had a stroke. The vet had wanted to put him down. Lily screamed. If they killed Bert she would kill herself. Bert stayed alive. And Lily kept all the promises she had made at the pet hospital. She devoted herself to the dog. For weeks she would run straight home from school and drag that poor animal out into the sunshine so he would get his vitamin D and she would massage him with her little hands to increase the circulation and she would mash up his food so it would be easy for him to get it down his throat. And slowly the old dog did get better. About a month after his stroke he could actually limp around the backyard on his own and lift a hind leg and piss on the weeds and rusted lawn furniture. And about two months later he was pretty much the same dog as he had been before the blood vessel popped in that big head. Pretty much. There was one residual side effect. When he sneezed, the left side of old Bert's brain would go into a tail spin and he would just flip around like a snake does if a person steps on its head. That caused Bert's name to change to Sidewinder.

Lily's last story was about something she had seen.

When Lily was fifteen, her parents got so crazy she had to go live with her uncle and his wife. At first they seemed like straightforward people. He went to work everyday, a state employee. And the wife, she kept books for several small businesses in the suburb where they lived. The aunt had an office in the house. Her clients would come by and they would work there in the room that used to be the den. By that age, Lily had seen a lot and heard more. It didn't take her long to figure out that the aunt did more than take care of the businessmen's books. Lily didn't care. She had hoped, though, that she had landed somewhere that would stay still long enough for her to grow up. It didn't turn out that way. The uncle finally caught on and he did care. Lily found this out one afternoon when she came home from school and found him in the living room, sitting on the couch, holding his knees with the palms of his hands. His face was

bright red. The door between the living room and the den was closed, but that did not stop Lily, like her uncle, from hearing the grunts and groans of the aunt and one of her lovers. Lily only had a moment to speculate as to who was with the aunt. The uncle stood up. Right in front of Lily this big man started to take off his clothes. By the time he undressed, the sounds on the other side of the door had subsided. But that did not discourage the uncle. His wife's unfaithfulness not only made him angry, it apparently excited him. Lily had never seen a grown man's erection. The uncle went into the den. He raped his wife and in his frenzy he bit off her bottom lip, the whole thing. Lily found it on the floor, under the arm chair. She wrapped it in a piece of plastic and gave it to the man who drove the ambulance. A doctor tried to sew the lip back on. It didn't work. The last time Lily saw her aunt she had no bottom lip, none at all.

CONTRIBUTORS

Jeff Block enjoys photography and is a Senior in the Business Department. **Grant Cogswell** is dropping out of CSUN to live in the forest near Clyde, NC, and work on his novel. His short story, "Paris in '73" was published in the Spring 1988 *Northridge Review*. He is a member of Sigma Pi fraternity and wants to be a rock and roll star. **Bobbie R. Coleman,** who claims the really good bios have already been used, teaches English, is a sign language interpreter and has had poems published in four previous issues of *Northridge Review*. **Cathy Comenas** has published in *Off Our Backs* and her work has appeared on numerous occasions in *Northridge Review*. **David Dannehl** is a photographer and entertainer. He played the male lead, Che Gueverra, in *Evita* on Broadway and was a Marine Corps fighter pilot. **Jed Dinger** calls his photograph, "Beware of 'The Road Least Traveled'... the back door offers more than the front." He is an exchange student from New York. A third generation resident of the San Fernando Valley, **Glenn Dwiggins** predicts at least one more. He has often been to Yosemite, but has not yet been to the top of Half Dome. He is currently working on a collection of stories about New Regensburg. **James Leishman Etchison** is in the writing program at Cal State Northridge and lives with his wife in the San Fernando Valley. He is also a keyboardist and vocalist. **Ida Ferdman** has had two poems published in previous issues of *Northridge Review*. "Twisting the Knife" is her first published short story. She holds a BA in English and is currently working on her MA. **Herman Fong** holds a BS in accounting and is earning his MA in writing. He has been writing for fifteen years and published in *Selah* and *New Harvard Magazine*. **G.N. Harris** is also a screenwriter. **Mary M. Harris** won the 1987 Rachel Sherwood Poetry Award for "Clan." Her work appears in many publications, including *Amelia* and *Blue Unicorn*. She is president of the Simi Valley branch of the National League of American Pen Women for 1988-90. **Eloise Klein Healy** is the coordinator of the Women's Studies Interdisciplinary Program. She's currently completing a manuscript called "Artemis In Echo Park." **Adria Hirsch** has published in *Northridge Review* and *Shattersheet*. She occasionally reads her work at BeBop Records and Different Light Bookstore. She is also a stained glass artist. **Chaney Holland's** work has appeared in *Electrum* and *The Jacaranda Review*. She has studied with Eloise Klein Healy and is coordinating the Summer Writer's Series for the Woman's Building. Currently, she is collaborating with a filmmaker and an environmental artist on a project about cows which explores mythical themes in relation to the contemporary urban environment. **Mona Houghton** is cur-

rently in the MA English program at CSUN. Her short story, "Twilight Rose," won the Omega I writing contest and subsequently appeared in *Crosscurrents, A Quarterly: New Work by Award Winners II.* Her short story, "Trust," previously appeared in *Northridge Review.* A film she wrote, *Leave of Absence*, won the 1988 Huston Film Festival Gold Award for dramatic shorts. **Fay Jensen** is completing her degree in English. She has worked as a Neonatal I.C.U. nurse in a hospital for many years, and "Resuscitation" is her first published story. **L.M. Lopez** is working on her teaching credential to teach junior high school English. She lives in Northridge, and "White Radio" is her first published story. "The Shallow End" is **Stephanie Mark's** second published story about her character, Nordis Spect. She has been writing for several years and plans to earn her MFA in creative writing. She keeps an entire set of pots and pans in the trunk of her car, just in case. **Kristina McHaddad** has previously published in *Northridge Review* and *American Poetry Anthology.* She would still like to live in the desert. **Marlene Pearson** has published in *Calyx, Aslyum, The Woman's Journal* and *Northridge Review*. She is doing her graduate work and teaching at CSUN. **Janice Pocengal** is a senior at CSUN and published a short story previously in *Northridge Review.* She plans to complete a minor in Italian while living in Florence and believes there is no greater suffering than having wisdom teeth pulled. **Margaret Ritchie** graduated from CSUN with her BA in English. She plans to get her MFA from UC Irvine. She has published poems in the last two issues of *Northridge Review* and is currently working as a substitute teacher and a waitress. She does not know which is more rewarding. **Patti Scheibel** is a senior at CSUN in the English department. **Carol M. Spizman** has been trying to write poetry for four years. "Women of Healthy Stock" is her first published poem. She is, terminally, a senior writing major at CSUN. **Thomas Trimbach** holds a BA in Art History and Political Science. He has been a graphics designer/art director for fifteen years and worked last on the Royal Commission in Saudi Arabia. **Pilar Wilson** is a senior in Graphic Arts at CSUN and has also studied at Santa Rosa junior college where she met her husband. She was born and raised in El Salvador and came to the U.S. in 1980. Playing with paper boats after a rain storm is one of her fondest memories. No biographies were available for the following: **J. Jivey, Maria L. Lopez** and **Jennifer Wolfe**