NORTHRIDGE REVIEW

FALL
1990

Northridge Review
Fall 1990

Northridge Review invites submissions continuously between September and May. Manuscripts should be accompanied by a cover page that includes the author's name, address, telephone number, as well as the titles of the works submitted. *The author's name should not appear on the manuscript itself.* Please limit submissions to three short stories and/or five poems. Photography and graphics are to be in black and white, and there is no limit to the quantity of these submissions. Manuscripts and all other correspondence should be sent to: *Northridge Review*, Department of English, California State University, Northridge, California 91330. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Awards

Two awards are given annually in recognition of the finest works published in the Spring and Fall issues of *Northridge Review.*

The **Helen Helms Marcus Award,** established by Helen Marcus, recognizes the best short story published by a CSUN student. The winner of this award receives two hundred dollars.

The winner of this award for 1990 is Scott Sandler for his story, "What Bob Knows," published in the Spring 1990 issue. *Northridge Review* expresses its gratitude to Katharine Haake for judging the entries.

The **Rachel Sherwood Award,** given in memory 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 winner of this award is Patti Scheibel for her poem, "The Return," published in the Spring 1990 issue. Northridge Review expresses its gratitude to Benjamin Saltman for judging the entries.

In addition, this issue of *Northridge Review* proudly presents the winner of the annual award given by the **American Academy of Poets.** The poem is "Come Here, Francisco Lopez," by Suzanne J. Ghiglia.

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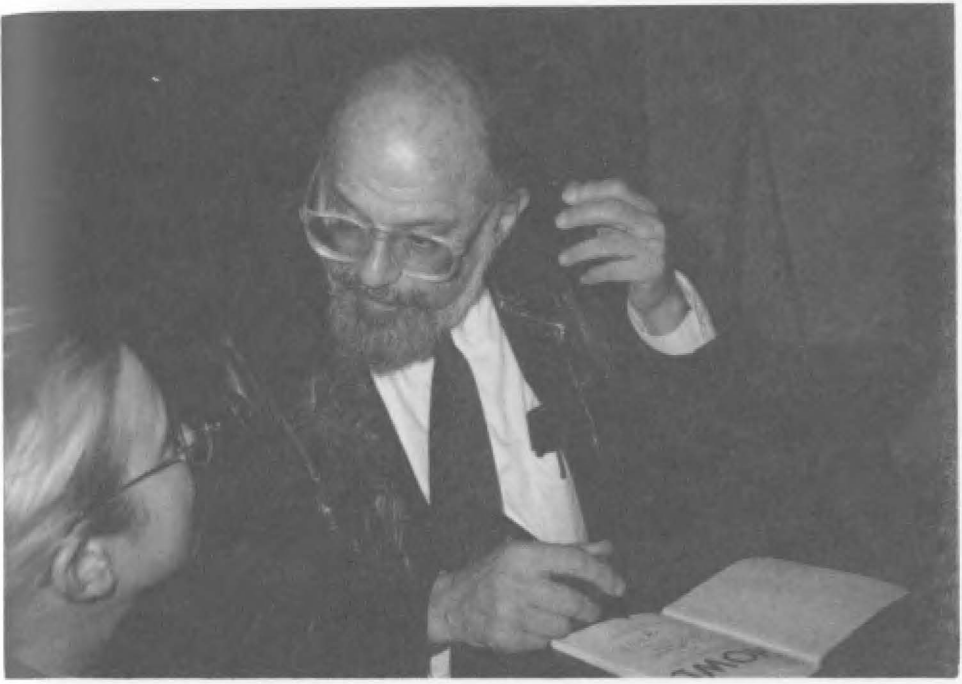

Allen Ginsberg
Jessica Mintz

Hart Schulz

We are fighting a war —
submarines in warm
wet seas

The moon is a headlight
with gauze

Suzanne Ghiglia

Come Here, Francisco Lopez

(who discovered the first gold in California dirt
while nibbling on wild onions)

Listen. A soprano creases the top of this paper sky,
now a void, the whole of your life suspended,
in these few moments like my branches
slung over your shadow, your tired bones.
If you are thirsty, find water.
People will say I am the Oak of the Golden
Dream, Francisco, and you are like a danger!
Forget the cows. Heat is rushing from your pores
and I have nothing important to tell you.

Your eyes are closed. A Redtail Hawk swings
there, see? You won't see him.
And munching grass, the lovely cows you've herded
to this valley. Imagine having water
when you're this thirsty. Dream a little
under my leaves, of all the shiny things
for which you hunger. Sleep in your certain peace,
before you wake, before you unearth those wild onions.

Winner,
American Academy of Poets, 1990

Andrew Comey

A Winter's Tree

I woke up staring into a deep translucent blue sky. A loud roaring filled my ears and I felt my body being gently vibrated. As I lifted my head off the truck bed, it felt like someone had peeled my scalp back and was blowtorching my brain. I pulled myself up and peered over the wall of the truck bed. I could see the San Francisco peaks far off in the distance, and for miles around, gentle sloping curves stretched towards infinity. The sight was empty and vast. Simple and beautiful. I felt safe. I saw a sign approaching and recognized it as one I had drilled with buckshot when I was younger and figured we were probably about halfway between Flagstaff and the reservation. Relieved there was no immediate crisis, I settled back against the cab and noticed the familiar figure of Sam Pena sprawled out by the tailgate.

I was glad to see him. Sam was what I call good people. His folks lived on the reservation down the road from mine, and we had been friends since childhood. I liked him because he didn't pretend to be anything other than what he was, and he didn't talk unless he had something to say. People who pretend talk too much. They use words the way a dog trainer in the circus uses a hoop. I once dated a girl who had me jumping through so many hoops that I probably could have qualified for the Olympic high hurdles. Unfortunately, instead of qualifying for the Olympics, I ended up marrying her. She seems really annoyed with me these days because I'm not as well trained as I used to be, but the fact of the matter is that after a

few years the pretty leaves fall off the tree and you're left staring at bare wood. Then either you still like the tree, or you don't.

Sam started thrashing around. Although I respected him for being honest about himself, looking at him sprawled out back there made me think that perhaps a little pretending isn't such a bad thing. The front of Sam's shirt, jeans, and cowboy boots were covered in dry mud. He looked like he had fallen flat on his face in a mud puddle. In the overall scheme of things, for a night on the town, this wasn't bad at all; a little embarrassing perhaps, but not bad. Falling flat on your face in the mud fell into the same general category as urinating in public, stuff like that. After all, if you're going to fall flat on your face, then the mud was a good place to do it, certainly better than asphalt or concrete. I had heard stories about guys getting drunk, passing out, and getting frostbite, or wandering out on the highway and getting hit by semis. Falling in the mud was no big deal.

Sam woke up abruptly and threw his eyes around wildly until they locked on mine. He then relaxed and threw me a big smile.

"Joe Feather, how are you today?" he asked lightly.

I shrugged my shoulders. He knew.

"Where's Mary?" he asked.

I shrugged again, shot Sam a hard glance, and looked away. I didn't want to go into it. We had left the reservation together last night but had lost each other in a sea of booze.

When I looked back at Sam, his big smile had come back like one of those inflatable dolls the kids have that keep popping back up after you punch them.

"You know, Joe," he said, "you put on one hell of a good show last night."

I didn't like the sound of this one little bit. Whatever it was, I knew I probably didn't want to hear it. I had pretty much decided to leave it lying just where it was but Sam must have sensed something and his face turned serious for a moment. "Oh Joe man, it was nothing to be ashamed about. In fact, if I were in your shoes right now, I would think it was maybe even something to be proud of."

The smile was back. Whatever he had on me must be really

good. I was too weak to take anything really seriously, and despite my best intentions, I could feel a smile growing across my face. I waited for him to continue, but he just sat there grinning.

"Well, are you going to sit there grinning at me until I throw you out on the highway or are you going to tell me?" I yelled.

When he realized I didn't remember he laughed so fucking hard he had tears in his eyes. When he finally came up for air, his face was pure glee.

"Well, I got to the Crazyhorse late, and when I walked in you and Mary were sitting one of the top booths with Gail."

Mary and Gail together were trouble. They had been best friends since they were cheerleaders in high school and had been maids of honor at each other's weddings. They got together about every week or so, and it seemed to me from what I'd overheard, that their favorite activity was talking about me or Gail's husband Mark. Basically, they would huddle up over a cup of coffee and just rip us to shreds. Usually their conversations started out with a "Whose husband did the stupidest thing this week"-type debate, before singling each one of us out for a thorough raking over the coals. Then they would pour another cup of coffee for intermission and rest a minute before going back over everything to make sure they hadn't missed anything juicy. One day I was home sick. They thought I was asleep, and I was amazed to hear some of the stuff those two talk about when they're alone. Guys are pretty bad about this kind of stuff before marriage, but afterwards we cool off and avoid being specific about certain things. For one thing, you don't want another man thinking about your wife in that way, and for another, you don't want other guys to think you're anything less than some awesome sex god your wife can't get enough of. Well, I found out Mary and Gail get real specific. I guess from their point of view, men are not the most graceful creatures on the face of the earth, but I always sort of thought we had our moments.

"It looked like you had been there a while," Sam continued, "and Mary and Gail were whispering in each other's ear laughing, and you were drinking from the neck and looking around with a pissed-off look on your face. I sat down at the bar to have some shots. About an hour later, I heard some shouting and turned

around to see you standing up in front of the whole bar swaying around with your cock in your hand yelling ' 'sa proud cock, 'sa noble cock, 'sa cock a man can be proud of.' Man Joe, it was better than Disneyland! I was laughing so hard I fell off my bar stool and took Mike Pensaro with me. The whole bar was laughing, even Mary and Gail. Well, not the whole bar. There were a couple of tourists right below you on the dance floor who were looking at you the way a coyote does when you have it in your headlights. Even the bartender was laughing, but the owner finally made him go get you. We were all clapping as he led you out, and when you got to the door, he even let you take a bow."

This was bad, real bad. It was not something that was going to be politely swept under the rug. It would spread like wildfire. People would call up everyone they knew to tell them about it. I could leave for Alaska right now and the news would beat me there: Joe Feather and his noble cock.

"Sam?"

"Yeah, Joe."

"We've been friends a long time right?"

"Sure."

"Would you do me a favor?"

"Anything, Joe."

"When we get back to the reservation would you take me out and shoot me?"

He just laughed. It was the kind of thing that was funny when it happened to someone else.

We passed the turnoff to Diablo Canyon and it brought back memories. It was in the walls of that torture chamber that I won the state cross country championship my senior year. It's funny, but I almost never think about running any more. It seems so long ago. Half the tribe came out to watch the race, and I didn't want to let them down. The race was very close and my main competition was a Hopi runner named Louis. I think being Indians and growing up at the high elevation of the Mongian rim gave us an edge over the city guys from the south. We were about even when we finally climbed out of the canyon and started the sprint for the finish line. I didn't think either of us had anything left until I caught a glimpse

of my father standing on the sideline. I was shocked to see him because he was always too busy getting unbelievably fucked up, or beating the shit out of my mom, or both, to bother with a small thing like a race of mine.

Ever since I was a teenager, the man had never had a kind word for me. He knew I was a good runner though, and I think part of him resented me for it, and part of him was proud of me. Whatever it was, I wanted to prove to that motherfucker that I was the man he never was. After I won, he never congratulated me. He saw me win. I guess that was enough for him. When I got home, he had already gone out drinking with his friends. He had gotten a ride and left his truck. I grabbed his keys, even though he would probably try to kick my ass for it, and went to pick up Mary. I didn't give a fuck.

When I picked Mary up, her eyes were sparkling and her voice was breathy. We drove out to one of the smaller mesas. There was nothing but desert night for miles around. We lay in the back of my dad's pickup and stared up at the stars. On that night they were shining just for us.

As we pulled onto the reservation, I thought about how far away all that seems to me. We let Sam off and drove to my place. As we pulled up, I saw a tribal police car and a Bureau of Indian Affairs truck parked out front. "Shit," I thought, "the Crazyhorse's owner must be really pissed." I got out, thanked the driver, and started walking up the drive. They got out of their vehicles and met me half way. The tribal police guy was a schoolmate of mine. His name was John. The B.I.A. guy I didn't know. John did the talking.

"Joe, we'd like you to come with us."

"I didn't mean to do it, John, I was drunk, and if it makes any difference, I'm sorry."

"I know you are Joe, but she's beat up pretty bad and I really don't have any choice."

"What the fuck do you mean?" I demanded, "Who's beat up?" They shot each other a quick glance.

"Mary," John replied.

I felt like I had been blindsided in a bar fight. I was just stunned. My hands started to shake. After a minute I thought about going for John's gun so they'd have to shoot me. I had always promised

myself I would never end up like my dad, and here it was staring me in the face.

"Joe, do you have anything you want to tell us before we take you in?" John asked.

No words would come out of my mouth. They read me my rights while I stared at the ground. I couldn't even look at them.

When we got to the jail, they took my picture, fingerprinted me, and told me I could make one phone call. There was no one I wanted to call. I asked John if it looked like Mary was going to be O.K. He said he didn't know.

John took me into a room and sat me down. "Look, right now we're going to have to wait until Mary regains consciousness to see if she wants to press charges. The girl who was with her won't talk. If Mary presses charges, you should get a lawyer." He paused for a minute and looked out the window. "You know, Joe, it's hard for me to believe you would do something like this." I put my head down on the table and heard the door close behind him.

A little while later another cop came and put me in a cell. Staring at the bars, I knew there was nothing left for me. I think they must have suspected it because they kept looking in on me pretty often. I sat and prayed she would be O.K.

A few hours later John came back. "Joe, she regained consciousness and won't say anything until she sees you."

I was so relieved she was going to be all right, that for a moment I just sat back and thanked the lord. I didn't know if I could face her, but I thought whatever she wanted to do or say to me, I owed it to her to face the music.

When we got to the hospital, John drove up to the front entrance and parked. Cops can park anywhere. We went in and got on the elevator. When we reached the fifth floor, the elevator doors opened and a guy in a suit came up to us and asked to speak with John alone.

"Joe, wait here and don't do anything to embarrass me." They walked out of earshot and had a short conversation. Then they turned and came back to me.

"Joe," John said, "put out your hands."

I held them out palms down. They looked to me the way they

always did, just ordinary hands. The guy in the suit examined them real carefully before nodding to John and walking away.

"Joe, that guy is a detective with the Flagstaff police. He told me that the doctors just told him that whoever beat up Mary used his fists."

I looked at my hands. A sliver of hope ran through me. I looked back at John.

"You're not off the hook until the girls talk, but it looks pretty good."

We started walking down the hall and heads without bodies floated past me. It felt like I was in a little control room in my head just watching everything. A door opened and I was looking at my wife's face laying on a white pillow. Her right eye was black and blue and swollen up like a golfball.

"Joe, Joe," she said in a small voice and held up her hand. I felt like crying. I took her hand and we sat for a while in silence until John touched my shoulder.

"Mary, who did it. Did I do this?" I asked softly.

She shook her head from side to side. I was relieved for about a second before a new feeling swelled up from deep inside of me and spread through every inch of my body. I noticed I was squeezing Mary's hand so hard it was turning white. "Who did?" I asked in a real tight voice.

"I don't remember."

"If you don't remember, how do you know it wasn't Joe?" John asked.

"It wasn't Joe."

John looked like he was going to start badgering her.

"Mary, please tell us what happened." I pleaded.

She looked up at me for a minute before answering. "Oh Joe, after you made such a fool of yourself at the Crazyhorse, me and Gail left and walked over to Pappy's. We got pretty drunk and Gail started flirting with this truck driver. When closing time came around, this guy offered us a ride home. We thought since there was two of us, it would be O.K. The minute we got in the truck, he was all over Gail. It was kind of funny and Gail didn't seem to be minding, so I just sat there. When he started to try to pull her pants

off, Gail started to fight, saying that she was married. Before I knew it, he hauled off and hit her across the mouth and told her to shut the fuck up. I jumped out of the truck and ran around to his side, opened the door and started pulling him off her. He let go of Gail, got out of the truck, and came after me. Gail got out her side and screamed for help. He started towards her, but I guess thought better of it and turned to get in his truck like he was going to leave, but for some reason he turned around real suddenly and it was lights out. That's all I know."

"Can you remember any details about this guy or the truck he was driving?" John asked. She told him everything she could, which wasn't much, and he left to go talk to Gail.

I sat there with her all afternoon. She fell asleep and I had a long time to think. I thought about killing truck drivers for a while, but knew the guy was probably halfway across the country by now. I thought about my dad. I thought about the difference between winning a race and waving your cock around in a bar. And I thought a lot about Mary.

About eight o'clock in the evening the doctors decided to release her. We had our arms around each other as we walked down the hall. A sharp winter wind whipped past us as we stepped through the front doors. A giant bare oak tree was lit up by spotlights on the lawn.

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Ronald Pape

Places the Desert Takes You When It Takes You

Early Summer, New Mexico

Acoma woman
Sky city woman
Bone woman
Yellow mesa woman
Dust woman
Mud woman
Earthy eyed obsidian adobe woman

I see her sit and shuck blue corn
Under the sun that has always been in this place
And will always be in this place

Burly armed pig iron grampa
Chicago German asks
—How can such a lovely girl
Throw away her life in this place?—

Acoma woman squats
Over a blue stone
Pisses gold
I taste the sun

Mid Summer, Nevada

The ghost dance begins again in the Nevada desert
Where Wovoka used to whirl and chant and whisper
To the horned toads and tumbleweeds

Now fat Kansas farmers from the Vegas slots
Sweat pooling in the ridge between belly and boobs
Shuffle and shout in the white dust

Ohio shopkeepers toss of stiff denim shirts
Sink raw and jutting knees
Between creosote circles
They Dance the One Dance One Dance One Dance Dance

White dust rises up
Into the burnt eyes of the sky
Santa Ana oven air presents the dust

To the soft pink throats of Angelinos
As they drift
Air conditioned
On melting black asphalt

Late Summer, Archeology of the Mojave River Basin

This is the place
Where washes meet
The place of cottonwoods
The jasper place
The black schist place
The place of chalcedony
And hard white clay

We dig here by centimeters
With garden trowels and paint brushes
Bending our backs to the full sun

Pores open to the greasy dirt
Our faces black with garbage soil
This is midden
The toilet sand

Once while picking at caliche
I glanced into the now dried wash
To see a purple black raven
Picking between the dull ribs
Of a long dead dog

What we find:
Charcoal, juniper seeds,
Piles and piles of rock chips,
Rat bones, deer bones, bear bones,
But never yet a human bone

Glenn Dwiggins

Smoke

I am older now, thinks Schmidt, straightening up from the billiard table after missing a shot, *much older now, and don't have as much energy as I had back then.* He picks up his burning cigarette from the slot in the ashtray.

"Your shot," he says to Riley, and Riley pulls himself out of his own thoughts to lean against the edge of the table. Like Schmidt, he had been thinking about something else, but it's the game for him now.

Now it is Schmidt who thinks about something else. He thinks about himself, when he was going to college, smoking. Back then he would take long, hard deliberate pulls, in a half-serious attempt at pulling the orange glow all the way back to where the filter connects with the tobacco, all at once, so he could continue with what he was doing, or maybe light another cigarette. He's smoking now, but hardly breathes the smoke in at all; what little filters past his throat settles dry like dust on the insides of his lungs. The rest floats up and around him, filling the cracks of his face and wandering in his hair, resting like feathers in his thinning, smoke-colored curls. He seems to feel it there. *Even if I had as much energy now as I did then, I wouldn't know what to do with it,* he thinks. He pauses. The cigarette and his fingers holding it are at about the level of his chin, and he thinks maybe he should quit smoking. *But that takes energy, too, and I really don't have that to spare.*

What he won't admit, or think about, is that the hypnotic effect

of the smoke's silent, soft flight, as it curls off wave-like into the yellow lamplight, would wash him into something like a cloud-life. The cloud surrounds him and everyone in the bar with him, and carries them off to somewhere else, where the always-blowing, always-changing winds that envelop the bar and all of New Regensburg in confused, chaotic energy, that threaten to pull apart the walls and erode the core of his peace of mind are stilled, and he shouldn't mind walking outside anymore, in fact he would even like to. The sun's bright light is filtered through this cloud to a dull but not oppressive gray, that still provides enough light. It is like the easing dimness of dusk, which leaves bright sunlight only on the taller buildings, and even this light is somewhat yellowed. This cloud-life is one into which he can fit, not like Edge of Town Road on these awful days of the annual airshow. The noisy planes are in the air and more cars are on the road than it can really handle, and they are all from strange places, and drive at strange speeds. There is all this and the wind blowing past his ears making long, thunderous noises and pulling at his hair and forcing his eyes shut, because the dusty wind seems to make the sunlight even brighter to him, and the planes seem to make the wind more violent. Living like this takes much of his energy, and he is always especially tired when the airshow is in town.

In this cloud-life, the people all move at the same speed, as if they were all in this bar, moving quite slowly, as if in a pause, like the wonderful pause when the wind is about to change directions. The only noise is the sound of glasses and ice and whispers. Schmidt feels this life, but he doesn't think about it. He puts the cigarette into his mouth and thinks, again, *perhaps I should quit.*

He now leans up against the wall and perches halfway onto a narrow wooden stool. He looks closely at Riley through his own Winston cloud, as Riley moves away from the same wall and bends down closer to the table, cue in hand. It is always this way. And Riley, when Schmidt is playing, does the same thing, watches his every move, as if he is concentrating on it alone. Looking at them from a distance, except that they don't look alike, we might think that they were like a pair of twin birds, leaning up, absorbed in thought, seemingly about the other, and then bobbing down in slow

motion toward the table, positioning the cue against the felt, making a short, quick stabbing motion, only to come back up again to watch the other. Only when we move much closer, we can tell that there is much that goes on that is quite different between the two. And the nearer we get, the greater the differences become, as different as the stories they have to tell, stories which are silent outside of the men, seemingly muffled by the smoke.

Looking closer, we can see that Riley moves more slowly than Schmidt does; he always takes the longer time to make his shot, to release the tension that Schmidt might feel had he the energy. As it is, Schmidt doesn't feel the tension; he just creates his cloud, occasionally contemplating the possibility of Riley's shot. From in his cloud, he knows. *Just might make it. Just might*, he would think, or *No way that's goin' in, no way in hell.* As far as Schmidt is concerned, he knows, so he doesn't need to expend the energy on tension.

We might feel it. Of course we might like this tension, like trapping ourselves in it only to be released from it seconds later. It may be our reason to watch this game between these two men. We might enjoy that span of time between interpretation and execution, dissolving the concreteness of Riley's attempt to sink the green ball into the far corner pocket into something ethereal, something on another level, perhaps spiritual. We might even suggest that if he doesn't make the shot, it's because he failed at something else, something far more important, and the failure to shoot accurately is some sort of punishment, self-inflicted, by his subconscious, fueled by an anxiety. We might like all this in the game, which we might think otherwise silly.

Whatever we might think, Riley believes only in technique. He is now thinking, *Maybe I should try closing one eye, and leaning like so, and bending my right arm so, and firing so*—It's all in the technique for him. This time his shot misses and as the white ball bounces around aimlessly, hitting other balls, making a light, wooden "tap" sound, he walks backwards towards the wall. He swings his cue up towards his head but stops, thinking about how his hands were positioned on the pool cue.

Schmidt knew that Riley would miss. "Tough luck," he says.

It is a quiet, dead joke that vanishes instantly. He is already reading, interpreting the table. For him, that's what it is all about: interpretation. Most of his time is taken up standing, looking at the table through his smoke, hiding parts of the green felt that might distract him from the crucial areas with his cigarette, his fingers—anything that small close enough to the eyes can block nearly the whole table, and during any one shot, the ball travels over only a small, narrow portion of the board. This is what interests Schmidt.

We don't play this game, and we may not go much for spirituality after all, but we don't think the whole thing silly, because we know that these men aren't silly. We now know of cloud-life, of the perpetually blowing wind, of the dust and noise of the airshow, of these things about New Regensburg that might cause some people to wish occasionally that they were somewhere else, maybe even somewhere like the inside of this bar, by the soft green felt of the pool table, in a world of rumbling wood, smooth, brightly-colored balls and the warm smell of cigarette smoke.

This is what Schmidt may wish, and although we know that he wishes to be elsewhere, neither we nor he is sure if this would be the right place for him, but now that is not one of his concerns. He is looking slowly at the table, one piece at a time, reading positions, constructing lines with his eyes, looking at the pockets for a clue. When he looks long enough at the arrangement of colored balls on the green field, one of the pockets swells just a bit, and a sort of path eventually appears before his eyes, which we cannot see; only he can. It always happens. For him it is a lightening of the felt to a brighter green, almost a yellow. It may as well be a burning white, for he doesn't wait for other possibilities; he just leans over and shoots along the path. Unlike Riley, his technique stays the same. If Schmidt misses, it means that his shot hadn't followed the path, so of course it wouldn't make it. This time it does.

"Nice shot, Bill," says Riley.

Riley doesn't want to be somewhere else; he has been to enough places already, and so far everything about New Regensburg he has come across has made him want to stay here more: the dynamic wind, the amazing airshow, this quiet friendship with Schmidt, this particular bar and billiard table. He hasn't been here

nearly as long as Schmidt has, not even a year yet, so he still feels some sort of thrill of newness to the town, and we won't as yet be able to tell if he ever will feel about it the way Schmidt does. His is a different story, and so far he wants to stay. Yet what he wants at least as much as this is to develop a foolproof shot. Because we don't think him silly, we wish him the best of luck. And even though he takes no stock in luck, and we might not either, but say it as a matter of automatic politeness, he would nonetheless appreciate such a wish from us.

This would be, after all, a sort of love, this giving and receiving of things as solid as smoke, things of little or no real value, with unwavering enthusiasm and honesty. Because of this we perhaps react too strongly when Riley misses. For to him it's just another step closer to the perfect shot: *to find something, one way is to find out where it isn't, remember it, and then look somewhere else.* This is what he believes.

If he had made it, is it because he did everything right?

If he had missed, was it because he did everything wrong, or just one thing?

How could he tell?

He had asked himself these questions at the beginning, when he first learned to play in Las Vegas, and he concluded then that he was going to have to play the silly game for a long time, always looking for clues.

Yes, he thought the game was silly back then, but it was a silly time for him, *a silly time, full of silly people*, he thought, not excluding himself from the description. But he liked technique, and for him, that has always been everything. *You just gotta do everything right*, he thinks. He lights a Marlboro (Schmidt's Winstons always give Riley a headache) and finds himself thinking about the times he didn't do everything right.

One particular time comes to mind, and it had nothing to do with pool. It is the one time he least wants to remember, which we know is a near guarantee that it will be the one most likely to come up. It is the one that sent him on his way from Vegas, that had him wind up in New Regensburg, even more than his attraction to the airshow. That was just an excuse. A picture suggests itself in the

shape of the smoke that comes from his cigarette, which he has brought to his mouth. He looks at the tip and sees a face surrounded by red hair in broad curls in the wavy fibers of smoke coming from the orange light. These curls surround a pair of broad lips painted a red he had only seen on sports cars before he moved to Las Vegas from his hometown, Rabbit, Florida. Also in this picture is a pair of faded blue jeans with a small heart-shaped hole cut out in the mid-thigh, exposing white flesh. Something about those jeans, the way they looked on her that time when she was riding with him in his car, and the way they were both smoking Marlboros from the same pack, made him feel a little crazy , but only inside. He had always preferred to maintain a calm exterior, in spite of everything, and because he had plenty of practice throughout his life, the calmness of his face froze into a stiff, solid outer crust, while the currents of his emotions shifted around just underneath.

He remembers something about that crazy day, the crazy feelings, the way they made him want to just hit the gas and speed out of town with her in those jeans, in that lipstick, with their smoke trapped in his car, and maybe go someplace else where they could sit on the warm hood by the roadside and look back at where they'd been. The city's gray silhouette would be just beginning to light itself up from within as the sun sank into the orange desert, painting the sky, and then he would pretend with her, saying *wouldn't it be fun to go down that road into that big town, they call it Las-V-something, and live it up real big-time for a couple days or so? Wouldn't it, though?* But then she asked him what he was thinking about, because he wasn't saying anything, just imagining it all to himself, with no change of expression on his face, and they were just driving around without a point.

"Not a whole lot," is what he said, "not much."

She sighed and looked ahead. Traffic on the main road was moving slowly, and the warm gray of the early evening was settling outside, matching the color of the air inside Riley's smoke-filled car. It looked like he might have had his windows rolled down, and the smoke had filled the streets of Las Vegas. "I can *walk* home faster from here than it would take you to drive there," she said.

Riley hadn't planned to take her home yet, but then he hadn't

planned anything at all for that evening, so her plan was just a feasible as any he could come up with. "Okay," he said and pulled over. And with the sound of the threads of her jeans straining against her movement, and the loud groan of the opening of his door, Las Vegas entered his car, dry, dusty, and empty, and he coughed.

That whole time for him was a silly mistake, a time to forget, if he only could. But like Schmidt, he still smokes.

Schmidt has a time he'd rather forget as well, a story he tells people part of sometimes, because he always liked that part, and still does, but that usually reminds him of the rest, the part he doesn't want to remember. This we also know to be usual, just the way things go. The smoke that comes from his cigarette and out his mouth and nose doesn't remind him of it at all, though; it just sends him to his cloud, so he is fortunate, for a while. He is just floating in his cloud of smoke.

He has taken his shot and missed. He coughs on the cigarette smoke, and sips some of his drink, which has left a wet circle on the small stool next to the wall. He sits on the stool, and moans imperceptibly as he feels the cold moisture rise up through his jeans. *It figures*, he thinks, almost aloud, but it comes out as a short grunt.

"I'm tryin' to shoot, d'you mind," says Riley. The two hardly speak when they play pool. When they do, it is the game that's in their words.

"Sorry, go ahead, Max," says Schmidt.

"Got any more problems, or can you keep quiet?"

Schmidt tries to ignore the warming wet spot he is sitting on, and soon he almost can't feel it. *Maybe it' ll dry before I have to get up again*, he thinks. He knows it is not likely, and he grunts again.

"C'mon, Bill, stop it," says Riley.

It is now, for some reason, that he remembers the story that he'd rather forget, and he doesn't have the energy to stop it. It is from his college days at the New Regensburg Community College, about the night when he and his fraternity brothers dressed the Hegel Family up for Halloween. The Family is a dark bronze memorial statue of the founders of New Regensburg that stands in the center

of the intersection of the two main streets, Edge of Town Road and Neckar Street. The statue is ignored for most of the year, except for special occasions, like Halloween. That particular night, Schmidt and his friends, drunk from a party and laughing at their cleverness, staggered out across town to the dimly-lit intersection and borrowed pieces of each other's costumes to dress up the sculpture, which was dark against the lamplight and cold to the touch. They used Schmidt's cape and someone else's white face make-up, scraped off with a finger, to dress Mr. Hegel up as Death. A "Little Sister" sacrificed her whole witch costume to Mrs. Hegel and ran around, laughing, in her witch shoes and full slip, which shone silvery in the moonlight. The three children they turned into small vampires with bits of black clothing and plastic fangs.

It was all funny to Schmidt and his friends for a while, but then the wind picked up and blew swiftly around them and the statue, circling them in a swirling cloud of dust. Then the shadowy forms took on a different spirit with the loose costumes draped over them, slapping around their dark, solid forms that even now reflected small flecks of lamplight from their faces, where the smooth bronze showed through. Schmidt and his friends couldn't stop watching them, as they appeared to waver on their pedestal. They looked as if they were preparing to step down. Schmidt even thought he heard them make some sort of noise, not usual for the wind. He stood and stared, frozen, and had we been there, it would have seemed as if the statues were the people watching Schmidt and his friends.

This is the part of the story that Schmidt really doesn't want to remember: While he had stood there, looking at the darkly-clothed statues, really more at the darkened halo that the flapping cloth made around the solid bronze than at the sculptures themselves, he found himself with his hand in the warm, dry hand of his closest friend. He tried to remember what might have led up to that frightening, yet unexpectedly thrilling instant. He tried to remember the nudging closer, the bumping of arms, even the sound of the breath of his friend, or even his own, but only remembered the wind blowing against his skin, making the hair on his arms stand up, and the blackish, solid, moving ghosts of the ancient Hegel family, and then there they were, in that cloud of dust and mystery. So instead

of trying to remember what it was that brought him to this situation, he remained quiet, and consciously held on, not yet wanting to let go, or even to ask himself how he felt about this. We might guess that he was just drunk, but that would change when we would later see how he had to deal with this for days after, and how, through it all, he lost his closest friend because of it. He was not just drunk; that was only a part of it.

Now he prefers not to remember this time, this feeling, the rough warmth of a man's hand in his, at all. He figures that it was something in the feeling he got when he sat on the wet stool that reminded him of it, sent the memories flooding in, soaking past even this dense cloud he is in. He figures that maybe the two feelings, the wetness and the hand, have something in common, and he lets out another involuntary grunt at the silliness of it all.

"Dammit, Bill." Riley has made his first shot, six in the corner, and was preparing for another.

"Sorry."

These are tense moments for these two men. When one is preparing for a shot, leaning over the table and squinting until his eyes are nearly shut, the other is supposed to be quiet and still. The only movement permitted is the hushed ascent of the smoke from their cigarettes, which gathers around the top of the triangle of light made by the overhead lamp. This cloud of smoke appears to us to threaten to drop on these men, and this threat is similar to the burden being felt now by Riley as he positions himself for a highly complicated shot: two banks and then into the corner pocket with the green ball. He was concerned about the violet ball's position in the path of his target, and he figured out a means to get around it.

Schmidt knows that he's going to miss this. Neither of them are any good at the elaborate stunts. Here, Schmidt thinks that to take a shot like this seriously is silly, a waste of time. But Riley has the time, and he feels that the right technique that can do anything, so he spends as much time thinking about it as usual, and he shoots. When his cue swings up away from the board and nearly hits the lamp, Schmidt says, "Nice try."

"Tough shot," says Riley, "Wrong hand position. Doom in shots like that." It is nothing to him, really. Not much to worry

about. He knows he has a long way to go, and he is willing. He ducks into his smoke and watches as Schmidt walks slowly around the table, holding his thumb in front of his face, squinting one eye shut. He leans against the wall, closes his eyes, and, under the stiff layer of skin, is happy. He can't see any smoke, just Schmidt in his vision. He opens his eyes, and a jet passes by, swinging the lamp just a bit, and making Schmidt's face grow much darker for a moment in the shadow. He hopes that Schmidt makes his shot, because he doesn't want to move right now. He is thinking, *move your guide hand closer to the ball, Bill.*

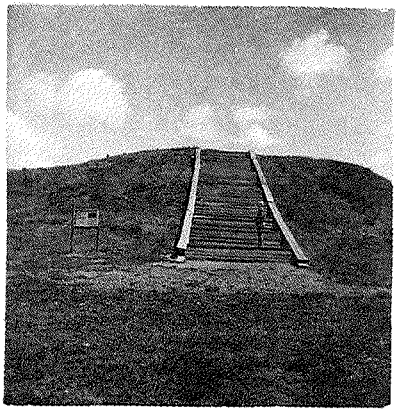
Schmidt hears the plane and lets out a grunt. He concentrates on the board again and it looks different to him this time. The path that was about to appear has vanished and a new one is forming. The path leads first toward the wall to his left, and from there toward the corner pocket, right where Riley is standing, dragging deep on a Marlboro. He moves his guide hand closer to the ball, and because of the strange reach needed to do this, he pauses and calls up some extra energy. When he slides the cue back along his hand it makes a soft hissing sound. He pauses again, aims down the bright path once more, and releases us.

Photo Sequence

Karin Kunstmann

IN

HER



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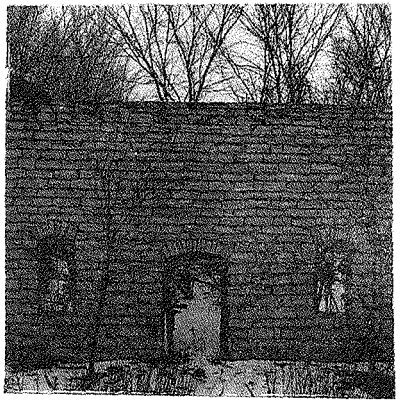

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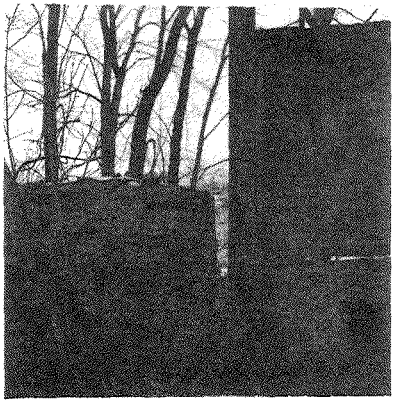

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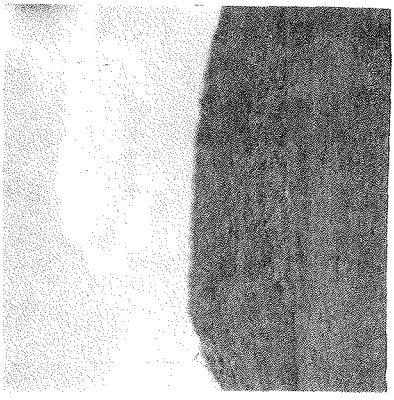
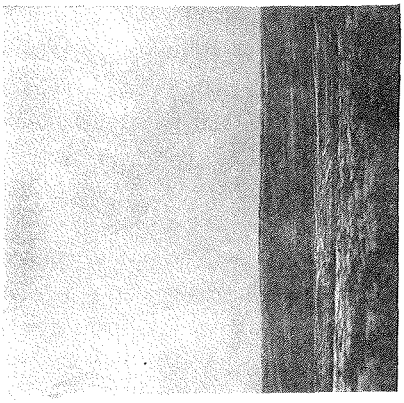
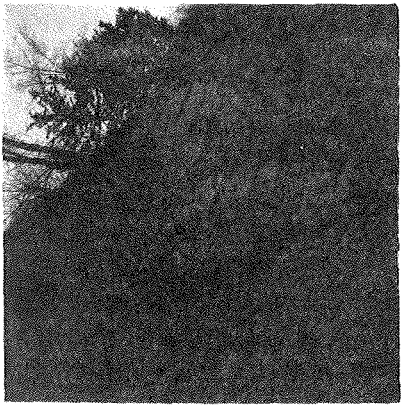






Stephanie Rioux

Home is Where the Dill is

So what I said was, I want to change my major, and I want to add
a minor,
and she gave me the paper, and I said thank you and gamboled off
into the sunlight,
intending not to hurry,
WHEN
ALL of a sudden . . .
he appeared with a new pickle for me.
I pulled my pants down,
but first I bit into the pickle,
puckering dill washover,
and he held me where everything counts.
I screamed HI
I LIKE YOU
into his pinky white ear,
and all cos of a little sugar pill named moon
we creeped up the ivy walls,
deposited the bomb in the ivory tower,
and scurried to the airport which was NOW OPEN TO ALL,
and hopped on a plane to Austria
where we smecked on Kaffee and sunk into the dark red couches of
Europe
holding hands, never to be ripped apart, always ready to
pull our pants down. The moon whispered hold as tight as you can!

and I screamed HELLO and he screamed I LIKE YOU
and my ears were ringing for hours.
Then the purpley blue ripple
quenched the sky
and I looked into his big bolshy eyes
and a dragonfly buzzed by after sucking long tall
glasses of orange juice with elephants of
Malaysian descent,
and it buzzed pickle la pickle loo pickle
so we lampolted to the airport which was NOW OPEN TO ALL
and flew off to England green faced and powdery place
where pickles grow in copse belliesand
the crowned jewels are made from Peek Freans
bisquits and
Ready Brek the futile friend of all will ride
in your warm hat for a bite of the dill.
BUT, he screamed, OLIVES! he screamed,
and taking the last bite of bread pulled me
by my hand into the warm boot of Europe,
where we sucked olives through straws blackly and
the moon sang harpsichord oh harpsichord. We
jumped into the fountain, and I pulled his pants down.
Where is my mouth, I asked —
Here, he said.
And where are my eyes, I laughed —
Here, he said.
And where shall I put my hand? I whispered —
and he looked down.
There floated an olive waverly like in the clear waters
of the fountain.
I put my hand Here. He squinted puffily
and the moon screamed, I LOVE YOU BOTH.

Home Home Home Home Home
Home is wherever you pull your pants down.
Let the moon into your belly.
Accept the dill.

Tut tut, it looks like rain,
Tut tut, it looks like rain

— Christopher Robin

"confiscate your balloon, son,
it's going to rain.
If your balloon pops in the rain,
all of your psychology will ooze out
and we won't be a family anymore."

The son, sitting on his red wooden stool, with its
paint chipping, began rocking, and singing
ya ya ya —
he knew his sister would think it meant something, something —
but the clouds they looked like rain.
He wanted to grab the bars of the iron
fences around all the statuary parks
in the Eastern Bloc,
but, he thought, they would surely fizzle listlessly,
like chalk in water,
and the sky would open vaginally,
and shower all down on him.
The bleb in his psychology would soften in the wetness
and break, break,
like father said, like he said.
He chewed down hard on his shoelaces,
sucking all the dust out,
and let his balloon fly away.

All the statues would be made out of squares.
The iron fences were really sparkly anode mud
coated with licorice.
The balloon went zipping out of its direction through
the opening in the clouds.
Oh my,
It looked like rain.

Maria Casey

meeting a demigod

you were a trout
salesman selling
fish behind icy counters
counting glassy scales
weighing heavy
in your leaden hand

grey clockface behind
your head speaking
ticked tongues strung
out on minutes
lasting nights you wait
counting fishy time

your seeking silent fins
wave past wetness
searching through dry death
slapping on the slivered dock
drowning in thick atmosphere
oxidating frigid

blood green with
moss and i with envy
counting on never
knowing the weight
of your heaviness
heaving on my line

the corner
of my ear hears
my foot tapping time
remembering to wait
to be waited on
as i fish for
the kingfisher

tempest

your shoe black
slickened hair
is harrowed in
the orange autumn
wind that shifts
your slender body
to the place
above the pit
in my stomach
it rumbles
from hungerlust
that knows
of the bones
of the dead
limbs of winter
love's passed
like the sound
of slitting wrists
my heart rips
and the knot twists
tighter as you
move towards me
in the churning
crowding my noes
with yesses

skeletal purge

in the three-way
mirror counting
back bones hanging
see through swayback
an ichabod crane
horse frame
never too thin forever
counting bones
through yellowed
lucid skin
spinal xylophone
see death shown
in oppressive counting bones

Annette Cenkner

Effigy

Imprint of your hand remains from last embrace,
circles of teeth still brand my thighs.
My life was projected onto your face,
every trivial detail was scrutinized.

Bound by your whim I would lie in wait,
for sleepless nights, your obedient whore.
Wishing I was meant for a better fate,
than a laundromat, convenience store,

and a pitbull who eats small children bit by bit.
Submission only whet your appetite.
Your friends who only knew me bitch by bitch,
hoped I would fade forever from their sight.
And then you who ate my soul wish by wish
While I bared my chest to your brutal bite.

Gossip

It's not true
Those things they say about me.
They think I mourned my dead cat too long.
And they feel there must be something wrong
With a person who grieves the death of their parents
Even though they're still alive.
But I say you can't get started too soon
On a big project like that.

Behind my back they all decided
That my hair is too blonde
And my skirts are too tight
And my friends are all criminals
And I must be a lesbian.

I must admit though,
Sometimes I get drunk at parties
And my car is always dirty.
And I eat out more than I cook.
I talk too much and too loudly,
And when I heard the news
about Jim & Tammy Bakker
I said, "I told you so," to everyone I knew.

But, other than that,
they are all vicious lies.
I did not throw myself on the coffin
Of my friend who died of AIDS.
I never shed a tear when Jeannie wrapped her car

And her beautiful, young body
Around that telephone pole.
Not a drop left my eye for Grandma or Uncle Ken.
So you see,
When they tell you that I wept for days and days
Until they all thought I would die from a broken heart,
You shouldn't believe them.

Barbara Sigman

Waiting for Ryan Kimberly

You helped the big bad Sosa kids
throw shoes up to the telephone wire
so we woke in the morning
and saw them there,
gym shoes hanging stupid and lonely,
swaying in the wind,
staying there
forever.
You wrote Led Zep on the STOP sign
at the bus stop
before I knew what it meant,
you lit firecrackers in the dead of night
and I jumped under the covers, heart racing.
You rode a noisy motorbike,
zooming past in a flash,
you were the one they all hated, jealous:
"Ryan Kimberly plays hooky!"

I loved you and wanted to be you
both at once: if I could be tuff
like Ryan Kimberly,
if I could be your girl,
Michael wouldn't try to kiss me anymore,
Teddy wouldn't chase me on the playground.

You never hung with our crowd:
too many wide-eyed children,
no juvie-hall punks on our block.
But one day you sauntered
up my driveway, alone and quiet,
no firecrackers or threats.
You shook your bowl-haircut,
took my forearm in your large hand
and traced lines on my palm.
A swimming pool, you said,
a big house and a handsome man.
You smiled at me, you didn't treat me
like a little girl.

You were right about
the swimming pool, the house,
but not the handsome man.
I'm still waiting for someone
to write me a crazy kind of love
letter: gym shoes gracefully
hung in the sky, so high
they stay there forever.

Everything

changes and shifts
in perspective
with you,
three days at the week's end
distorted, curved like a scythe.
Straight lines vanish; you slice
wedges of time like cake,
serving sporadically but
giving me the marzipan.
Everything changes:
landscapes erase themselves
and re-form,
autumn winds blowing away
dirt so mountains glisten,
soil wet-black sprouting
new grass, sun lighting yellow
leaves' bellies and backs.
I skip, giddy
from drinking
this freshness. In
my own belly, I feel
quickening: you're in me
without consummation,
lending me grace
under pressure, com-
passion and
smiles for strangers.
Everything changes:
Sunday stands still

and forbidding, dark boulder
I strain against
without moving, making
three days askew: curved
like a scythe with the weight
pulling upward. If I stand
on tiptoe I cannot reach
the peak of that day when
I'll see you. I sleep
in the scythe's cradle,
waiting for you
to wake me with a kiss
and lift me from that
glinting blade's danger

Diana Azar

Persephone

The mourning mother does not interest
me at all. Mothers always mourn.
But the girl — where was she when
the crippled god of darkness suddenly
appeared? In the meadow linking
clover chains, easily pulled apart?
Or on Elysian playing fields arm
in arm with her friends?
She went unwilling, so they say.
And yet she stayed through
the long winter months buried inside
the earthy dark and every spring
when the light opened with the leaves,
unhindered by him, she returned.

The wonder isn't that she stayed
down there with him sweating
under a shower of sparks beside the forge,
but that, having known his hot crafty hands,
uncompelled, she ascended and returned.

Amy Reynolds

Discernment Of Spirits

Evelyn scattered bread crumbs to the swarm of pigeons around her feet. She seemed completely absorbed in their frantic scuttling, but she was also eavesdropping. Two women sat on a bench across the walk. Their dresses were flowery, pink and lavender, and fluttered against their crossed knees.

One of the women said, "I don't know why she can't just get over it."

A white bird with a pink stub of a foot scrambled after a crumb of the stale bread. One wing dragged, feathers crusted.

The other woman said, "Oh yes, she's just too much to bear."

Evelyn sat on the bench, warm sun on her face. Palm trees glittered in the wind off the ocean. She flung out the last of bread crumbs. Soon the birds wandered away, heads bobbing. Out toward the marina sail boats skittered across the green water. Red sails, blue sails, yellow sails. Evelyn wondered who was too much to bear. What couldn't she get over? They moved on to someone else. The short, high-noon shadows crouched under their bench began to stretch. She stopped watching them.

She'd been coming to the park every day at noon-time for two months, ever since she'd lost her job. She liked to think she was on vacation. First she'd take a city bus across town and then transfer to a Santa Monica Big Blue Bus down Wilshire. She could look at the want ads on the bus. She did this every day, circling the most promising jobs with a blue pen. She had good typing skills and a

pleasant phone manner. She'd been a secretary. The counselor at the Department of Human Resources had been optimistic about her job prospects. She'd said Evelyn had a "front office appearance," which Evelyn understood to mean she was attractive in a neutral sort of way, and young enough at twenty-eight. Her hair was almost blond. A flurry of careful blue circles decorated her newspaper.

The two women looked at their watches and exclaimed at the time. They hurried off. Evelyn had been like them once, rushing around, always busy. Her priorities had changed.

At the employment office last week she had overheard a couple of vets talking.

"It wasn't meanness," one of them said.

"Oh, yeah, my wife just got fed up after awhile."

The first one shook his head. "She says, 'Hey — get over it already.' Like I had the flu. I just looked at her."

After that Evelyn said it to herself in the mirror every morning — "Hey, get over it!"

Evelyn watched the one-footed pigeon pecking at a fragment of orange peel. It kept its balance by tapping the stump of its bad leg on the ground. Tap, tap. Evelyn hadn't slept well the night before. She'd had another attack. A beating like wings against her ears, inside her head. Something pressing down on her chest. She had tried to speak, and then to scream. She heard herself whimpering through the roar which grew steadily louder, like a giant seashell in her head. She couldn't breathe.

Then it had stopped. Silence. And then under the silence the darkness humming a little song, "Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me."

Some gifts you couldn't give back. She would always have her grandmother's purple lamp. The awful cramping pain in her hands would never go away, the arthritis a legacy of the year she spent in bible college practicing scales in ice-cold practice rooms. The young men had gone to Vietnam for a year when they were eighteen or nineteen, and then carried it always like a virus. Everyone was in it for the duration. She had decided that the attacks were caused by a heart murmur. Yes, it was her murmuring heart that mocked

and tested her.

Evelyn gathered up her newspaper and her big leather handbag. It was nearly one o'clock. The wind had picked up, cold off the ocean. She found a phone booth and lifted the receiver. She ran her finger down the tight lines of newsprint to the one that said "CLERICAL — lite typing & phone skills required. Pleasant Westside office." She liked the Westside. She dropped a dime in the slot and dialed the number, listened to the phone ringing and a dim crackle of static.

"All's Well Insurance, good afternoon." A very pleasant phone voice. The static swelled.

"Um — my name is Evelyn Davis, and I understand you have a job opening."

"Yes we do, would you like to come in for an interview today?"

Evelyn listened to the hum behind the voice. A little song, singing in the static.

"Today?"

"Yes, we have appointments available at 3:30 and at 4:30."

She heard her heart through the throbbing of her knuckles, clenched tight against the receiver. Half an aspirin a day didn't seem to do any good anymore.

"Hello?" the voice said.

"Yes — 4:30. I think I can make it at 4:30."

She noted the address and hung up. The office was in Culver City. She still had to do her shopping, and the bookstore, and back toward home and the post office. She crossed Ocean Boulevard past the line of cars stopped for her, expensive, bright colored cars with tinted windshields, so that most of the drivers were invisible. An old woman in a grey overcoat sat on the bus bench. The overcoat was like her grandmother's, from that time when Evelyn was eight, when Evelyn saw her walking down the street, carrying a suitcase. Evelyn remembered the overcoat especially, because it was a very hot day. But it could not have happened, she reminded herself, because Gramma had died the spring before.

Riding the bus was all right as long as she kept very still, as long as she looked at the floor, or out the window. This time a man

kept turning around to look at her. She knew him from somewhere. She held the newspaper up to her face. She thought she saw a scar across his chin, like Matthew's. Or the Lithium Man? She lowered the newspaper surreptitiously. The man was gone.

Yesterday she'd seen the Lithium Man again, this time in front of the McDonald's on Santa Monica Boulevard, a frozen photograph as the bus rushed past, both arms plunged into a Ronald McDonald trash can, a torn green blanket around his shoulders. A few weeks before she'd seen him at the corner of Sixth and Vermont sleeping on a bus bench. Before that, crouched on the sidewalk outside the employment office on Beverly.

The first time was just before she got fired, in the parking lot of the market at Olympic and Western, Korea-Town, kind of a rough neighborhood.

"Eh—eh—excuse me, Ma'am," he'd said.

"What do you want?" He'd come up behind her and surprised her. Usually she kept the scene scoped-out better than that.

He'd wanted to know how to get to the lithium clinic on San Fernando Road, way over the Hollywood Hills in Glendale. Evelyn was afraid of him. He shook all over and lines of sweat streaked his dark, dirt smeared face. He smelled bad. She told him to take the bus all the way north up Western, over the hills.

"You see those hills?"

He nodded like he understood, his head bouncing up and down like a toy. "Then you ask somebody for directions. I don't know that part of town."

"Thank you—thank you," he said.

His round eyes filmed over with things he saw behind her, over her head, on the backs of his hands. His mouth opened and he seemed to have more to say. Something writhed in the back of his eyes. Evelyn turned and ran for the 64 west on Olympic, her grocery bag banging against her hip. From the safety of the bus she'd watched him wander across the parking lot. The northbound 12 stopped at the corner but he walked on, his head down as if into a wind.

Sometimes she dreamed about him, the Lithium Man, clawing

his way up over the Hollywood Hills, the mesquite and juniper scrub tearing at his clothes, and then it would be her, fingers bloody, beginning to see things again, crying for a sweet dose of calm. A little forgetfulness. Lithium Carbonate. She'd looked it up.

As usual, she rode the bus up to the grocery store on Wilshire and bought two cans of Campbell's chicken soup, a quart of low-fat milk, a tin of coffee. Walking swiftly in her old Adidas, she went on up the street and turned on San Vicente, to the grounds of the Veteran's Administration. She knew all the paths through the maze of buildings, some abandoned and ready to be torn down, others with parking lots full of cars. She liked the park-like setting, wide green lawns and a sanitarium's hush over the place. She headed toward the back of the grounds to the Sepulveda Boulevard entrance. Across the street was the entrance to the cemetery, acres of white crosses cross-hatched on the green quilt of grass spread over the lap of the hills.

At the center of the grounds was a big old oak tree. She sat on the bench beneath it in the dappled sunlight. After a moment she pressed her hand against the rough bark of the tree and closed her eyes, and the tree thrummed against her palm. Here something had closed, something finished. She could feel them rushing up the great trunk of the tree into the sunlight, and then curling and falling, a slow settling into forgetfulness.

"Just as I am, I come. I come."

She opened her eyes.

A shadow moved at the corner of her vision, a disturbance in the rippling force through the tree. Just like stray cats and dogs, they were beginning to follow her, and she understood it was the man on the bus.

In the bookstore she browsed through the paperback romances, conscious now of the shadow always just out of sight, behind or to the side. Maybe it was Matthew, with the wild eyes and the torn jeans, lugging his battered guitar into a Sunday night church service all those years ago. She had fallen in love with him. Someday he would come to her, like the others.

The words of the novel she held in her aching hands blurred.

They had covered the ice-cold concrete floor of the Fellowship Hall with remnants from a deacon's carpet store, but it hadn't helped much. The Christian Youth Worship members sat on the floor in a circle, their voices jumbling together — almost the language of angels, that state of ecstasy that she could never reach. Her eye kept straying to the black widow poised in its web under the broken radiator. It occurred to her that the devil was everywhere. They prayed for a long time, calling on the Holy Spirit, and then Matthew anointed her forehead with olive oil in the sign of the cross.

"To some," he said, "Is the gift of prophesy. Others receive at the moment of Pentecost, the gift of healing, or of tongues. God has blessed you with the Gift of Discernment of Spirits."

She paid for the novel without looking at the clerk, then remembered her appointment.

"Do you know the time?" she asked.

"It's 3:45," he said.

She looked up at him. "Thank you," she said.

Something shifted in his face. "That's a beautiful scarf," he said. She could see the vapor forming around his words, slipping out from behind his eyes.

He handed her change back and a shimmer reached past the twitchy movement of his hands, brushed her fingers.

Her hand jerked back. Coins spilled across the counter.

"I'm sorry — I —"

She left the change and escaped out into the sunlight. The clerk's startled face burned in her mind. Sometimes the barriers began to slip. She was supposed to have been useful to Matthew, to be able to spot a good spirit from a bad one. But they were all just the same sad tatters, starved and fading fast. And they recognized her, too.

She waited for the bus. It was getting late, and she hadn't been to the post office. She was cold and her hands ached, were beginning to curl inward, now nearly useless claws. She had been called to be a church musician, like her father, had practiced scales for hours in the unheated rehearsal room, perfecting her craft, thinking about how Matthew had gone without even a small blessing; she had misplaced the honor of her work. God had sent

a punishment to confirm what she already knew — that she would never be like her grandmother, or her father or like Matthew, that if God was to save her, he would have to drag her through the fire to do it. He seemed perfectly willing to do it.

Evelyn looked down at her clothes, her worn tennis shoes, her faded jeans. What had possessed her to agree to a job interview?

Not today, she thought. I can't today.

She had to get to the post office; it was so important to be reliable. It had been difficult losing her job. She had gotten the flu, and her defenses had faltered. A breakdown in her immune system. She'd gone to a party when she wasn't completely well. That was when she realized she'd been seeing them for some time, and had pretended not to notice. They were crowded up into the corners of the room, watching the people with a sort of resigned horror. She tried to carry on a conversation with a man about foreign films and then politics and then they turned to personal computers while the whole time something peeked around his elbow, pulled at his coat. She watched the shadow tear off his really lovely tie and try to strangle itself. She had a hard time concealing her anxiety.

When Matthew left for Texas to be a missionary, she'd hated him for running out on her. She had been his Mary Magdelene, fourteen years old at the time of the anointment. At his feet she had learned his songs, "Amen-Amen-Amen" over and over, "Hallelujah," the harmonies spiraling up and up around the melody until she'd felt the hot chill of the spirit up the back of her neck, as she had when she was seven, when she first was saved.

It was at the annual summer revival, and she remembered the swamp coolers whirring, blowing in the smell of the hot summer pavement and overgrown grass, and in the silence just before the visiting evangelist began to speak, a siren wailed. His voice rolled from the pulpit, the River of Jordan over her head, preaching on the Four Horses of the Apocalypse and the raising of the dead, the Anti-Christ, and The Great White Throne of Judgement. He spoke of the Unfaithful Servant and the Foolish Virgins, cast into Outer Darkness and The Lake of Fire.

Then they sang her favorite hymn, the voices of the old people

bleating while her father's huge, battered, workman's hands played through the familiar chords, "Just as I am, without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me, and that Thou bid'st me come to thee, Oh Lamb of God I come, I come."

And the preacher had looked right at her and asked her to come, and so she had stumbled terrified up the aisle. She was soon baptized, washed in the blood of the Lamb, Indelible Stain of Salvation.

Evelyn stood in the step-well of the bus and surveyed the passengers carefully.

"Get on or get off, sister," the driver said.

No one looked familiar. She sat in the back, holding the novel open on her lap. It was called *Passion in the Sand.* Then she closed it and pulled her Bible out of her bag. Lately she'd taken to carrying it with her, a talisman of some kind. Tucked into the back was a picture of her grandmother from the time she had visited, back when Evelyn was just a baby.

Her father had taken it out in the Mojave Desert, a joshua tree and a black clouded sky behind his mother. She looked past the camera, through the horizon line to some future, or listening to something. A storm gathered behind her. Evelyn looked into her eyes. She expected lightning to strike.

It bothered her to think about her grandmother. Her father used to say Evelyn looked just like her, that he could close his eyes and think it was his mother talking. Evelyn couldn't imagine how that could be so. Her grandmother had worked in the fields all day long and raised a big family; she'd nursed her husband for years until he died, then went all over the county visiting the sick. Evelyn had never heard a bad word about her. She was a kind of saint.

The first time Evelyn remembered staying at her house in Indiana, her grandmother had told her, "There's these angels that comes and stays at the corners of the bed, ever since your grandpa passed on in there. Don't pay 'em no mind, they won't hurt you." She was completely matter-of-fact about it.

Evelyn had stayed awake in the great four poster, oak bed as long as she could, listening to mice in the baseboards, a cat mewling

outside the kitchen door. And then she must've slept because something startled her awake and she watched — not daring to move, or breathe, wishing her heart would be quiet — the angels glowing a green phosphorescence like sea creatures, their wide shining wings folded back, paws curled like farm cats on a fence over the knobs of the bed posts. She watched them watching her through green-gold eyes, watching over her, just like they said in Sunday School.

She'd lost her job because of an incident with the office manager at a staff meeting. Evelyn noticed first how thin Barbara looked, how wispy, the bow around her neck just so, and maybe too tight. Then she saw that behind her chair was a creature, dark and huddling, impossibly cold. It began to moan. Soon it started a dreadful keening, drowning out Barbara's discussion about the correct procedure for filling out a systems request, and soon the torrent of grief filled the room. No one noticed. Not one noticed it rising to its feet behind her, crying out for Barbara's mother, dead three days.

Evelyn had stood up and said, "Excuse me, Barbara."

"Yes, Evelyn, you have a comment?"

"No — it's just that — I'm sorry about your mother."

The creature whimpered.

"How do you know about my mother?" She was angry. She had a policy about bringing personal stuff into the office.

"I—I'm psychic." Evelyn didn't know what else to say. She was no more psychic than anyone else in the room. "But it's okay, Barbara, really it is—" she rushed on — "because Gladys was with her — "

"My God — just leave me alone!" The woman started to cry, and couldn't seem to stop. The shade had vanished.

Everyone looked at Evelyn, horrified, and she realized that such things weren't supposed to happen at staff meetings. And then she realized that the room was full of these shadows, hanging onto light summer dresses, squeezing out of three-piece suits, pressing against the walls.

"I'm sorry— I'm sorry—" Evelyn said, and walked out. She

couldn't go back to work after that. So they fired her.

The sun was starting to set. Evelyn caught the bus north on Vermont and walked the few blocks up Franklin to her apartment building. She liked the thirties-style bungalow, her tiny, high ceilinged apartment. But she would have to move soon. She opened the door and there they were, silent as usual. At twilight, their favorite time, she would take them for their walk. At that hour they could pretend that it was just the uncertain light that made them so indistinct.

She didn't know what to do with them. Sometimes she thought a good softball game would loosen them up a little. Sometimes she just wanted to shake them. Their silence unnerved her. Their mournful eyes followed her everywhere.

She put the chicken soup on the counter. There was a knock at the door. She thought it would be the landlord after the rent again, but then she recognized the shadowy man on the bus. The Lithium Man.

"I found you," he said.

Naturally, she let him in. As the chairs were long filled, he lined up with the others along the wall. Some had even taken to bobbing like corks up against the ceiling.

"I got rules here, you know," she told him, her arms folded. "No crying during the night. And stay out of the bedroom."

He nodded dumbly. Her grandmother's purple lamp shone through him — he was quite faded.

Evelyn didn't consider herself a spiritual counselor. She opened the cans of chicken soup and dumped them into a pan. Soon the healing smell filled the apartment and the shadows in the corners brightened, glowing a little. All she could do was feed them. All she could do was keep them warm.

Herman Fong

Tangerine

Moon rising new in a late winter sky.
The oak clock chiming the passage of days.
Tonight, we gather patient as worshippers,
solemn as mourners, and ponder
the death and birth of years.
My father offers me a tangerine,
dangles it by a stiff green twig
with leaves curled and intact.
Begin the year with good, he says,
and with good the year will end.
The fruit shines bright and clean
like a ball of gold.
In my room,
I notch the skin with a knife
and peel it easily,
unwinding it in a single wide strand
as simply as thread from a spool,
separate the white membrane, like veins,
and taste its sugary juice,
the sweetness of Double Happiness.
My mother sees the tart skin drying on the sill
and smiles, tells me
there is luck in removing the skins
in a lone strip with hands

free of weapons—
The seasons will come with fortune
and leave behind long life.
When they have gone to bed,
I wipe clean the blade,
hide it in my coat,
sleep fitfully till sunrise.

Paula Licht

The Breeder

Uncle Stewart plots the family trees:
hunched at his desk in rumpled clothes,
he ferrets out superior genes
for coat color, eye color, shape of head—
the rest get marked with an X.
He crosses sons and mothers,
sisters, brothers;
failed experiments get sterilized
and sold as pets.

This year,
we're growing classic Seal Point Siamese.
Uncle Stewart's with a first-time queen:
she lies flat against her cotton mat,
belly taut and full.
Breath comes faster, eyes grow distant . . .
and the kittens come out twisted,
wrapped too tightly in their glassy Baggies—
Uncle Stewart has to intervene.

The queen rejects her heirs;
we have to feed them all by hand.
I poke milky droplets down their throats,
stroke petal-soft infant fur.
Heads wobble on their reedy necks;
faces open to the light like flowers—
azure eyes and rose-pink tongues.
I want to will them life, every one,
but only three out of five survive.

Uncle Stewart shakes his grizzled head:
the male has splotches on his legs;
the females have kinked tails.
No stud fees, no prize queens, no blue-ribbon champions.
We pack them in a cardboard box
like baskets of geraniums.

Tan noses push through the air holes.

Souvenirs

i tried to photograph the lizards:
scuttling out from pitted rocks
and dusty grass, their flat, olive bodies
glinted like dull bottle glass. i waited
in thickening heat, focusing,
but they arrowed away, darting into brush
as if i were a bird of prey.
my shots were full of cracking sidewalk,
empty paths and broken twigs.

with rare determination, i insisted
on dismantling the bed each night,
afraid one slithered in after the maid,
but they preferred to burrow
in soft sand outside our door.
annoyed, my new husband watched t.v.,
while purple twilight blackened slowly.

later we lay apart in silence;
heat still billowed at midnight
on this tiny island.
coarse sheets chafed my sunburned skin—
i wanted to sleep on the beach,
pillowed in sand,
but couldn't find the proper voice.
i placed a hand upon my stomach, still flat,
trembling at the slightest noise.

on tuesday i walked to town,
eager for souvenirs—i had in mind
distinctive handicrafts:
native blouse or woven basket or perhaps
a sterling silver lizard with diamond eyes
to wear on a chain around my neck.
but all they had were t-shirts and seashells
and cheap plastic earrings
made somewhere else.

while i learned to load suitcases correctly
on the last day, a lizard skittered
across my foot. she was quick,
surprisingly dry and feather-like.
she trembled on a stone, blinked,
then disappeared.
we drove carefully through rutted roads
to the international airport
and waited restlessly for our plane.

Patti Scheibel

Building A Family Tree

Halfway to the sky I bury myself under covers
in my grandma's old too-tall bed,
face even with the window, the incandescent clouds.
This bed used to have portable steps
but they got lost through the years,
cast into family black holes of moving and death.
The bed itself is all that's left of a woman
I never knew, who I can't pry loose
from the far reaches of my mother's mind:
did grandma tell awful jokes, did she prefer
morning or night . . . do I have her eyes?

Family histories worn down into a few grooves,
she said, says, "After grandma died
grandpa remarried and she willed all
but this bed to her own side
of the family, even the photographs."
Maggy, new bride for an old man,
a gap I fill in, he filled in
with the cold need of a man
in a dirty house with no dinner,
had you no pity on the old man's daughter?
I speak often to the dead, expecting an answer,

This bed holds me up,
Grandma's body touched it, she dreamed here,
scratches in the headboard, dark riches of wood
so beautiful and well made.
She must have wanted to give my mother
so much more than this.
I study my mother in case anyone asks,
her words, the color of her eyes.
I don't want the only thing left of her
to be mute furniture and desire.
Curling into this bed, into grandma's formless self,
I wander through unreal landscapes.
Solid wood stretches around me, mine now,
pushing my weightless self up through
a cloudy night to grandma moon.

Scott Sandler

The Lobster House

You are on your third beer and are searching for Orion's belt or the Big Dipper and you momentarily forget about your daughter who lies in a bunk bed on the bottom deck, beneath the floorboards. Her feelings are hurt, her nose is stuffed up with snot and she has been crying. You say we'll talk about this in the morning and you mean it at the time, but now that you are on your third beer, wrapped up in a shawl, the ocean, and the stars, you forget what it was even about, little things, and you have no intention of carrying this into the morning.

This wonderful woman, Melanie, the one from the Lobster House, hands you your fourth beer and puts her head on your chest. She sings you a song that she learned in the first grade. You remember the first line only: "Oh, I was born, one night, one morn, when the whistles went BOOM, BOOM." You notice how her cheeks puff out like a walrus' on the boom, boom part and laugh out loud, saying you will have to teach that to your daughter. She says, "It's a nonsense song," and takes the bottle from you with her big hands and you remember that this was the first thing you noticed about her, were those hands, back when you and your daughter first started coming to the Lobster House. They were as big as frisbees, you thought, and watched as she stuck them into the lobster tank, and how the tank itself seemed to light up when she did this. She had snatched one lobster up and held it away from her face like smelly diapers. "Here you go," she said, lobster juice dripping from

her big, frisbee hands. Button on her apron said — ASK ME ABOUT OUR PEACH PIE. You remember what you did that night, how you locked your door and imagined what it would be like to rub lobster juice all over her body, and that moment comes back to you now that you are on your fourth beer and she is in your lap, and you reach under her skirt and say, "I want to get you off."

Your daughter leans her elbows on the railing, looking out at the water, the wind blows her hair back. You put your hands on her shoulder and she won't even look at you. What was it you promised her? That it would be just the two of you? That you would get her one of those neat wristwatches — the kind where you can tell how fast you're running and play Asteroids at the same time? You try to remember exactly when it was that she stopped talking to you, but you are not thinking hard enough, or you figure she has just blown this whole thing out of proportion, and you sing her that song of Melanie's, thinking that she will enjoy that boom, boom part, but no such luck.

You feel as though you've hit a wall, where neither of you can go any further, so you figure well, maybe Melanie can connect, maybe she, being a female and a mother of two of her own, will be able to break through somehow. So, she gives it a shot. She says, "O.k., I've got something to show you," and balances five stacks of nickels on her elbow, lets her arm fall and catches them without effort. Your daughter thrusts out her hand and Melanie drops the coins in her palm. Your daughter looks Melanie square in the eye and says, "O.k., I've got something to show you," and pulls some extra coins out of her own pocket, and one-ups her with six. Melanie says, "O.k., I've got something to show you," and seven stacks of nickels fly throughout the boat, ricochetting off the railing, sploshing off into the water. Melanie is on her hands and knees picking up the coins, and your daughter, believe it or not, is smiling.

You and your daughter have been to the Lobster House so many times that when she pulls her homework out at the dinner table it doesn't bother you. She says I have to get it done by tomorrow. You watch as Melanie turns late customers away, saying, sorry we're closed. She puts chairs upside down, on top of tables. Your

daughter, meanwhile closes her books, kicks off her shoes, leans against the wall, and strikes up a conversation with this ugly, blue swordfish mounted above the cash register. She says, "You think you've got problems?" She says, "What's it like to be shellacked?"

You sit out on the deck, wrap your shawl around her shoulders and kiss her. You say, "A pretty face is like a Melanie." You say "A pretty face is like a melon. A mellow knee. Chief Mellow Knee." You say, "A pretty face," and put your hand on her breast and smile. You say, "Hey kemo-sabe."

The three of you drink blackberry wine in the back of the Lobster House out of jumbo dixie cups ("No way," Melanie says that she's going to do anymore dishes) and you bring up the idea of taking this cruise. You have the pamphlet you picked up from the travel agent folded in your pocket. You are so drunk, you don't remember what the pamphlet looks like; you only remember the color blue. Melanie says that she was on a boat once. A whole bunch of her friends took her whale watching. She brought her two children, the twins, along and they both get sea-sick because they have identical tummies. She made them both close their eyes and imagine that they belonged to this ocean; they were the dolphins, the trout, the hump-backed whales, they were the ocean. She learned all about meditation from her first husband, their father, and she tells you about how she rubbed their tummies, focused all her positive energy in their tummies, and only one of them threw up. Maybe it is the wine or maybe it is the way she draws circles in the air with her big frisbee hands, but whatever it is, you can't take your eyes off her. She says it was a big waste of time anyway, because there were no whales that day, even though her friends, who didn't like the idea of wasting their money, insisted there were.

Your daughter has never been on a boat before, but is quick to remind you what happened to Gilligan and his friends. She recreates the storm that occurs at the beginning of each show by shielding her eyes and yelling, "Sploosh." She says that her favorite one is where the castaways stumble upon a chest full of costumes and movie equipment and go hog-wild. She says that if you all go, she wants one of those white hats like Gilligan's got.

You are the first one to wake up in the morning and you lean

against the railing, watching the sun just hit the ocean and turn it into tinfoil. You see quick, darting flashes in the water, and wonder if those are fish or not. Your daughter walks right up to your side and you wish that she'd put her arm around you or tell you that the water looks beautiful or cold or something, but she's standing next to you, you can see her freckled face, the tiny puffs of her breath, you can hear her blow her nose, and you have to be satisfied with that. You almost wish she'd hand you her kleenex as a reminder of this moment. Your daughter bounces up and down in her barefeet and her LA Rams pajamas and you tell her that she better change before she catches cold. As your daughter leaves, Melanie comes out, and they both laugh and give each other little pats on the butt, as if they were barroom buddies, and you wonder if this has something to do with last night when you were stone drunk, and Melanie decided to teach your daughter that "boom, boom," song. You couldn't hear them, you could just see their puffed out walrus cheeks. You could see the stacks of nickels fly into the ocean like it was one humongous wishing well. Melanie leans against the railing now, and you watch as the wind rolls the hem of her cotton skirt around her legs like seaweed. You say, "good morning, sleepy-head."

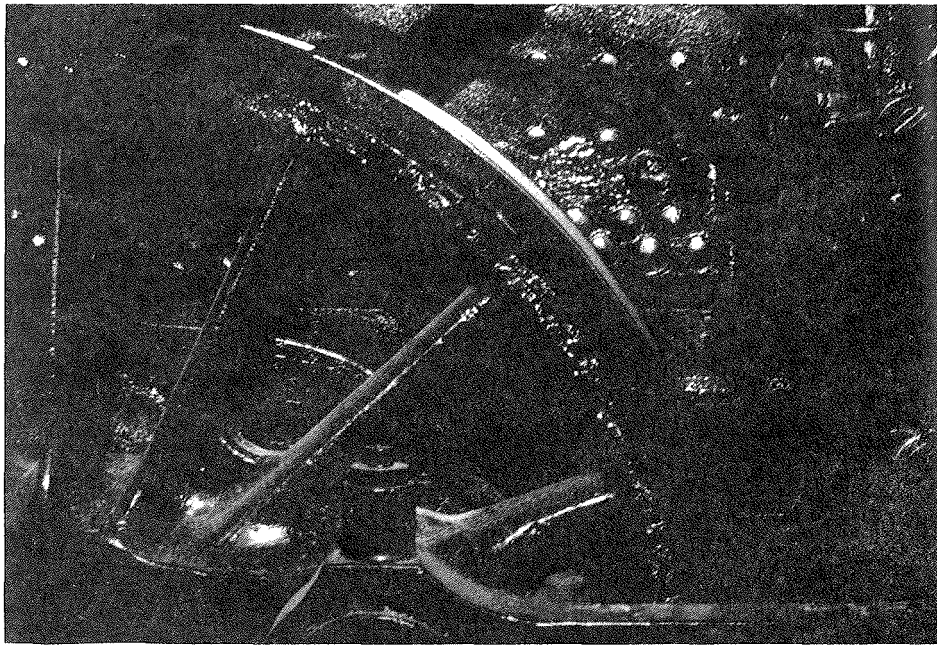
You are all playing Twister. Your daughter is the designated spinner. "Right foot blue," she says and you slide your leg in between Melanie's, making her look all out of proportion, the three-legged woman. Melanie's really out of it, laughing at everything you say, laughing every time your daughter shouts out a command — "Right hand yellow," she says and Melanie snorts out : "NO WAY," but does it anyway. You are feeling young tonight and spread this joy around by letting your daughter finish off your beer, without saying anything. She starts on another bottle and now your daughter is not even waiting for you to complete your moves anymore. She's just whacking at that metal spinner and shouting out commands: "right foot red, right hand blue, left hand yellow, left foot red." She looks up and Melanie's leg is lifted so high, she can see her underwear. You are holding her waist, trying to keep her steady. Together you look like the letter Q, but you can't hold it too long and soon you topple over. You look up from this

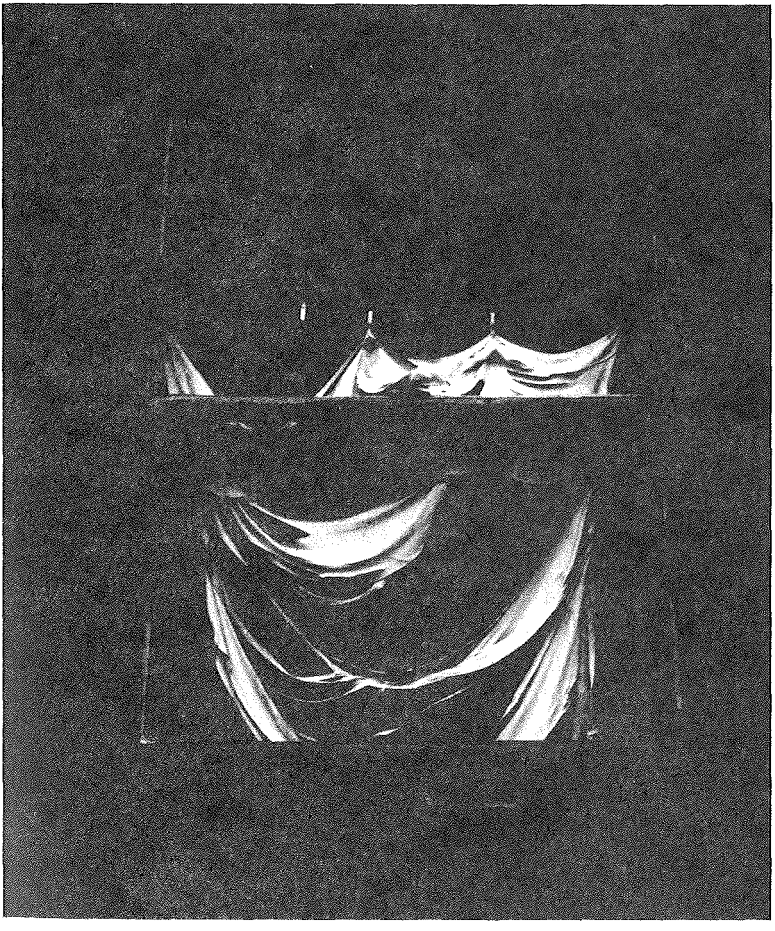
polka-dotted mat, and your daughter is smiling, the incriminating spinner in her hand. Melanie holds her stomach and says, "I don't think Twister on a boat is such a smart idea." Then she throws up.

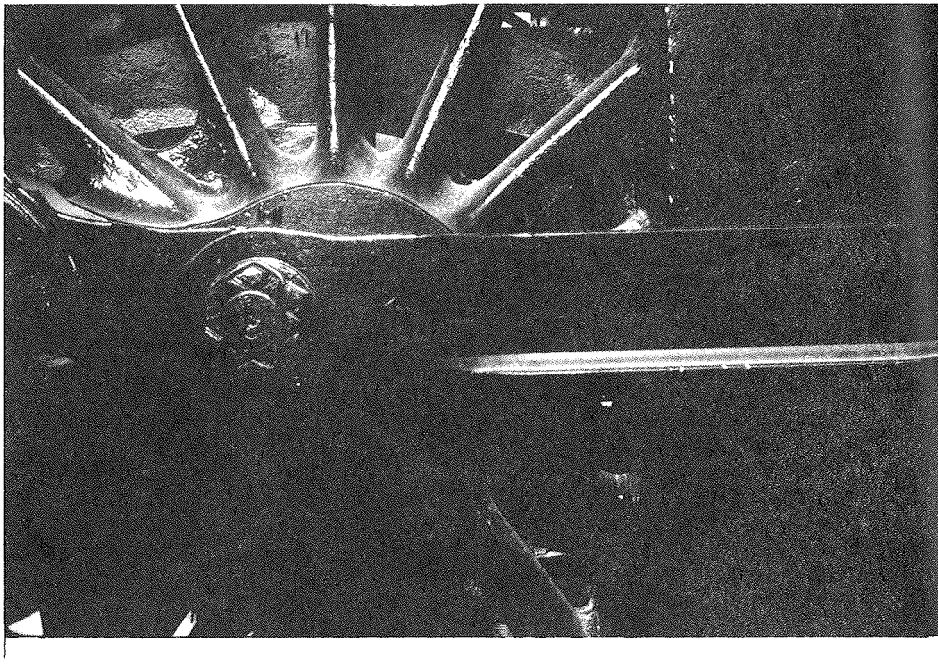
Your daughter watches Melanie as she prepares the food. She is amazed that there are so many ways to serve fish: sauteed in butter and garlic, raw, broiled, skewered. Sometimes it comes whole: head, tail, and all. But you can always take off the head or tail if you want. You can leave in the eyes, or if you so desire, cut them out. Melanie does all of this so casually, that she almost seems cold-hearted. Your daughter asks her why she can't just leave in the eyes, and Melanie says to her, "Honey, a lot of people get spooked real easily. They don't want their dinner staring them back," and then Melanie goes straight to deboning her salmon, slices it open and pulls out pieces as easily as one pulls out coins from their pockets. It is too hot in this kitchen for your daughter, so she heads off to the front room, to where the cash register and the shellacked swordfish are. She focuses all her energy into that swordfish, like Melanie had taught her to do. "Pick out one object in the room and become that object." And it is working: her back takes on the curve of the swordfish, her eyes become black marble, there is a gloss on her forehead. It is here, beneath this shellacked swordfish, that she comes to realize something, something that she will not be able to express to you until she is already a Junior in college and you are both stone drunk on beer and blackberry wine: "There are two kinds of people in this world," she says, "one who is constantly worried about making mistakes: about exposing the film in his camera, about overcooking the fish, about losing money through a hole in his pocket, about getting holes in his pocket, and there are the ones who are perfectly willing to make mistakes, and you know what I'm talking about, taking everything so casually that soon everything weighs the same and nothing is very important, and it's like that fish, shellacked, smoothed over so much, that you almost forget it's there."

Photographs

Warren G. Kroeger







Mary Harris

Old Homestead, New England

The restored farmhouse is two hundred
years old. It has its own history.
Former owners unearthed gravestones
on the property, paved them in a terrace
by the back door. The coffins
have never been found.
She imagines them buried below topsoil
erupting like teeth through gums.

Her husband refinishes antique furniture
in the barn. She lines
windowsills with tomatoes
ripening in sunlight.
When he cuts grass, the mower drones
across the fallow field.
She watches from the kitchen,
slicing zucchini from her garden.
They know seasons as well
as farmers who settled the land,
believe they can cultivate
a family as easily.

At night they plow together,
skin taut as green tomatoes.
His deft hands stroke
the grain of her body
like wood sanded beneath a plane,
desire one bone between them.

Jennifer Wolfe

Letter

By the time you get this
I will be in some charming room
halfway across the country
humming my good-mornings
to the fishbowl, the sunlight
slanting in just so, moving
over the postcard
of the Japanese Tea Gardens,
redundant with cherry blossoms
in its silver frame,
and onto one sleeve
of my bathrobe blooming roses
—Can you see it?

I hope that the girl
mooning over her steamer trunk
and handkerchiefs
is thinking of someone else
because that room is still
months off and I must confess
that tonight I am thinking of you
all too often
so that the pain of it

keeps me sleepless,
writing a letter in the only
language I know, sending it
to the only place
I'm sure you'll ever get it.

You're unsuspecting
standing in the hallway
as a familiar face
works its way through the crowd
to give you this special delivery.
You crouch down along the wall,
running your index finger
over the first page
and then you see this,
start reading,

and if your world is swirling in,
if your heart pounds as you read this,
drowning out the voices, the crowd,
that slightly puzzled face
standing before you,
if these words pound into your skull
with the dull grace of a jackhammer
then know, know that somewhere
I too am swirling and know
that this letter is for you.

Jennifer Wolfe

Accident at Madeleine's House

I

Carlo sits in the swimming pool
and cries, pulling the yucca
spear out of his right arm,
his body rigid, his blood

forming a loose aura.
The accident exiles him to
Big Bear where he walks around
the lake 3, 4 times daily,

anything to keep the pain
away, as if pain were
a person he could avoid
just by not being home.

II

I never actually saw the accident, I was living in Lake Tahoe at the time, on the South side, with a family of butchers. I didn't like

meat and thought that lake was a poor, dingy excuse, but the forest leading off behind the house I lived in was wonderfully empty, always sunny and always clean.

It was in this forest that I read the note my mother sent me telling me about Carlo's accident. The note was written on the inside of a card handmade by Mexican schoolchildren. She had drawn red hearts all along the margins and taped a silver pendant to the inside of the envelope. The pendant design was called Laguna Lady, and she wanted to know if I recognized it from when we had all lived in Laguna Beach together. Carlo had hurt his arm, fallen off the roof, but he was all right and they were living in Big Bear while he recuperated. I remember not knowing where Big Bear was. I wore the pendant every day. I think that it's pretty ironic, now, that we both spent our summer walking around dingy lakes, waiting for time to pass.

Time has passed. I don't wear the pendant anymore, it needs a longer chain. Carlo doesn't think about the accident anymore, he has other things to think about; his heart ticking itself away each night; other pains to walk off.

Carlo talks to me in the kitchen. He says, "Men must have their driving goals." I think, he can't be talking to me, he can't be looking at me and saying those words, he must be talking to someone else, he must not know that I'm here. Men must have their driving goals. Men must get in their cars and drive someplace and when they get there they must drive someplace else. I'm thinking about the coffee I'm making and getting the crumbs off the counter I just wiped down five minutes ago. I amaze myself, how I cluck and nod and get coffee and placemats and napkins and then shake them out and put them all away again. Carlo's voice weaves in and out of the sound the sink makes when I run the water through. He tells me about New York, wearing Zoot Suits and carving the Last Supper in stone, the chisel slipping on Jesus' hands, crippling him. He does not think of the crippled Jesus, he thinks of the stone, of the chisel.

The doctors want to cut open Carlo's rib cage, take out his heart and tie it up in knots, speak to him in strange languages, tell him to be careful. Carlo is not careful, he screams himself into a foaming gray sweat and howls like a wounded coyote in the back of the ambulance.

The last time he was in the hospital I paced the hallway outside his room, listening to him cry for his sons, for Madeleine. I remembered Madeleine's face suddenly harsh in the light over the dining room table, "You'll die a lonely old man, Papa," and yet I am there so it must not yet be time.

I am his protector. I breathe out fresh air, forgiveness, a second chance. And yet he forgets, impatient with the poems I chant over him, the weak coffee I serve, the rise and fall of my voice with all of its words he can't understand. He has refused food I have touched, suspicious of my sudden womanliness, fearful of pollution. And yet I forgive him.

I don't think I am being clear enough, I don't think you can see the man I see and I see him so clearly, all surface and bone, his face a sculpture, his stained long-sleeved undershirts, baggy jeans, the smooth brown bald spot perched on the back of his skull. You need to know about his energy, sparking, tireless, manic. Too hungry to eat. Too tired to sleep. Too busy to get anything done.

Carlo the tyrant.

Shhh. He's working.
Shhh. He doesn't feel well.
Shhh. He's sleeping.
Shhh.

Seven years old and seeing the over and over again crash of the Swedish crystal. Waiting for him to come home, waiting for the cloud to cross his face as I tell him, waiting on the doorstep to be let back in, waiting in my bedroom to be let back out.

Thirteen years old and I am peeing on the front lawn at three in the morning, crying, ashamed, afraid to make noise, flush the toilet, cross the squeaky floorboards, wake anyone up, afraid to wake him up. Peeing on the front lawn. Afraid.

Three years old and sobbing my guts out in a restaurant, "My skin is leaking!" Carlo, bewildered, empty-handed, open-handed, "Jesus fucking Christ! Can't you get the kid to stop already?"

Jesus fucking Christ, didn't she just go?
Jesus fucking Christ, don't you have anything else to wear?
Jesus fucking Christ, what do you mean she doesn't like it?
Jesus fucking Christ, does she have to make so much noise?
Jesus fucking Christ, isn't there anything to eat around here?

Somebody pat him on the head and give him something to eat. He'll calm down. Calming Carlo down. Feeding Carlo. Washing his clothes, ironing, mending, twenty-five cents a shirt, ten cents a button. Making Carlo tea. Listening to Carlo while he tells me he will move us all to Italy and buy us matching leather jackets and fast cars and he will paint only the most beautiful women, or only the oldest women. Admiring his newest treasure, a leather suitcase large enough for his paints and a French easel, something we can take with us. Listening to Carlo while he tells me that what I need is an older man, someone who can appreciate me, someone who can buy me refrigerators and fur coats. Standing there, incredulous, watching Carlo work himself into a frenzy over jewelry made out of popcorn, solar energy, the best way to make toast. Watching over Carlo.

No. It still isn't right. Now you hate him and you haven't even seen him yet. Haven't even. Carlito. The household genius. Holding open doors, holding out chairs, pouring drinks, lighting cigarettes. Generous. Handing out gifts like door-prizes, picking

up the check, bringing flowers. How can I tell you how I have cared for this man? Without making you wince. Without making you think I don't know my own mind.

Carlo once gave me the universe; an eight carat chunk of lapis lazuli with me, a ruby, stuck into the side. I hung it on a gold chain and put it in my jewelry box and on especially bad days I take it out and think, This is the universe and this is me within the universe. This is me within the universe.

Time is still passing. I can sit in my own kitchen now and listen to him talk, connect his words with other words, other events. His voice is soothing. I like my kitchen, I know that when he gets too excited I can give him something to eat. For two years he has been dying. He is stubborn and does it slowly. Carlo is bored, he is tired. He tells me he wishes it were all over. I cluck and find him an apple. He gnaws on it morosely and gives me instructions for his funeral. Madeleine cannot be there. I hand him some raisins and remind him that I don't go to funerals. Ridiculous! he snorts. Ridiculous! I put the kettle up on the stove and tell him about the new coffee shop on La Brea. He wants to know if they have good omelettes and tells me we'll go there for dinner. I pat him on the head.

When I was younger, Carlo used to paint me all of the time. I have a photograph of the best one he did of me: I'm wearing a brown felt hat with tattered silk flowers and a pink bathrobe. It is in a picture cube my mother gave me for Christmas the year Carlo hurt his arm. Next to my picture is the one he did of my mother with the queen of hearts hanging over her face. Next to that is a picture of both of them, sitting with friends, on the steps of their old art gallery. The top of the cube has a picture of an old friend of the family in a ponytail and with his dog. The bottom of the cube has a picture of Madeleine, beautiful and mysterious with a son on her lap and two stupid little dogs on each side. I would like to show you this picture cube. It is the best one I have ever seen and it could probably tell you what I am trying to say with so much more simplicity. It's the best thing.

Amy Reynolds

When She Was Out

Striking the match
is the first satisfaction.
The little snap,
blue flame creeping
up the wooden stick
to bite your finger
and you must
fling it away.
Such a little fire,
only the rose patterned
wall paper and the ivory
damask drapes
crackling.
The explosion of
mother's flower
garden dresses.

Honorable Mention,
American Academy of Poets, 1990

Quickening

I have always been
here, inside you,
even in the germ
of yourself
uncurling in the dark
center of the one
who carried you,
blind, reptilian, to light;
and in her foremother
I waited for this day
when I could touch
the curve of sky
I thought was endless,
my heel at the root
of your quickening heart.

Contributors:

Diana Azar has been writing and publishing both poetry and fiction for quite some time. In addition to writing, she teaches part time at Irvine Valley College. She has been published in the *Snake Nation Review*, *Albany Review*, and *Dan River Press Anthology*, among others. The Dan River Press published a collection of her short stories, Looking for the Worm, in 1989, and New American Writing selected this collection as one of the best small press publications in the United States for that year. Work of hers will also appear in Cal State Long Beach's *Genre 1990*.

Maria Casey recently graduated from CSUN with a BA in the English Writing Option. She's a Taurus and loves sushi and fettucini alfredo. She collects Jamaican voodoo talismans and loves to Lambada.

Andrew Comey grew up in Tucson and is now a junior in the liberal arts program. "A Winter's Tree" is his first published story. He is horrified at finding a real job, and will graduate in 1 1/2 years, at which time he will go to graduate school and continue writing.

Ready to do something else, **Glenn Dwiggins** has gone to Tuscaloosa to attend the Master of Fine Arts program at the University of Alabama. He received his BA in creative writing at CSUN, and has been published in three previous issues of *Northridge Review*. He received the Helen Helms Marcus Award for Fiction in 1988, and is sad that he couldn't take his cat, Genie, with him, due to pet restrictions in his apartment building.

Herman Fong has been published in previous issues of *Northridge Review*. He is a CSUN graduate student in the Writing Program, and has won both the American Academy of Poets Award and the Rachel Sherwood Award. He works at the world-famous Dutton's Books.

Suzanne Ghiglia has twice been awarded the American Academy of Poets Prize. She is currently teaching in the CSUN English department and is hoping for a good teaching job after she receives her MA next year.

Warren G. Kroeger works in the motion picture industry. He has a BFA in ceramic arts and photography from Arizona State University, and has done graduate work in film at California Institute of the Arts.

Karin Kunstmann was a starving artist for a while but has gone back to school to get teaching credentials, elementary level, at CSUN. She is working as a teaching assistant and is still photographing. She did graduate work in photography at the Cranbrook Academy of Arts in Michigan.

Paula Licht now works on short stories primarily. She is a senior in philosophy. She is married and is expecting a baby in November — "that's my big event of the year."

Jessica Mintz did her undergraduate work at UC Berkeley and UCLA, and received an MA in English at CSUN in 1990. She is currently finishing her first novel.

Ronald Pape is a graduate of the CSUN writing program. He will attend graduate school after one year of work in the "real world," which he has found "decidedly irreal." He still lives in the desert, and is now commuting from one desert to another, the latter being the San Fernando Valley. He will be marrying soon.

Amy Reynolds received her BA in writing in 1982. She is a graduate student at CSUN, and is a working mother expecting her second child. She has published in *Poetry L.A.* and *Northridge Review*. She plans to go into teaching.

Scott Sandler graduated from CSUN in May and is hanging out.

Patti Scheibel is a CSUN graduate student, and she hopes to live in Kentucky and teach at a community college when she graduates.

Hart Schulz has been publishing for ten years. He has a book of poems, *Wesly*, published by the Ana Capa Press in Ventura, and has been published in *ZZYVA*, a San Francisco journal. He now writes fiction primarily and teaches English.

Barbara Sigman is a senior in the Creative Writing program at CSUN. She loves chocolate chip cookies and her favorite poet is Frank O'Hara.

Jennifer Wolfe is currently working toward an MFA in poetry at Bowling Green State University and is very happy.

Mary Harris was unavailable for comment.

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