

NORTHRIDGE

REVIEW

SPRING

1994

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CONTENTS

RANDOM LESBIANS

Tara Kolarek

3

GO

Helen Laurence

11

THE GLOSSING OF THE MAN IN THE SIDE-SHOW

Tom Tapp

15

LOOKIN

Shinning Bear

20

HEARTS A FIRE

Julie Coren

25

LIQUID

Chip Erikson

31

Contents

SAN FELIPE

Amy M. Lam Wai Man

35

SHE TRIED

Alicia Vogl Saenz

42

DELIVERY

Melody Stevenson

45

KICKDRUM HEART

Lance Dean

51

1969

Terrence Dunn

55

TWO FATHERS

Shinning Bear

61

CITY TERRACE FIELD MANUAL

Sesshu Foster

65

URBAN UNREST

Tom Moran

68

ELEGY ~ IN MEMORY OF BRIAN

Carrie Etter

71

SAN FELIPE, GECKOS, AND MESCAL

Chip Erikson

73

EDITOR'S NOTE

vii

CONTRIBUTOR'S NOTES

96

CREDITS

100

SUBMISSIONS

103

ILLUSTRATIONS

RANDOM LESBIANS

John Sanders' Archives

2

THE GLOSSING OF THE MAN IN THE SIDE-SHOW

Tom Moran

14

HEARTS A FIRE

Chris Jurgenson

24

SAN FELIPE

Amy M. Lam Wai Man

34

DELIVERY

Perk

44

1969

Chris Jurgenson

54

CITY TERRACE FIELD MANUAL

Chris Jurgenson

64

SAN FELIPE, GECKOS, AND MESCAL

Chris Jurgenson

72

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Megan Emery

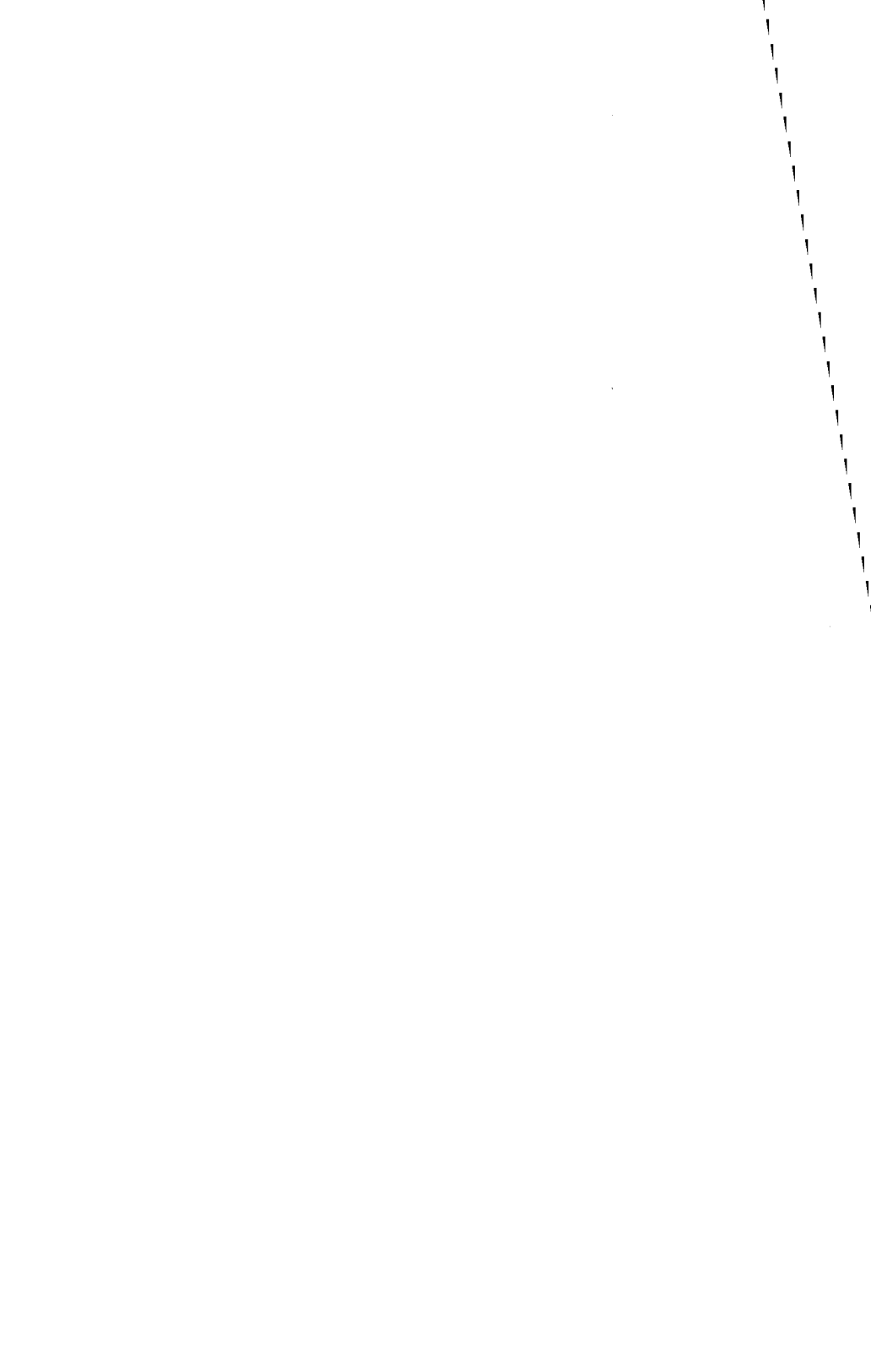
Editor's Note

We would like to acknowledge that an unprecedented event has literally taken place under our feet. As everybody knows, January 17, 1994 will stand as a milestone in all of our lives. In the past five months we, as individuals and as a community, have had to deal with the consequences of the earthquake on our own terms and in our own time. And while everyone has had a different experience and different stories one thing remains constant, that is that our lives have been forever changed and will not return to exactly what they were on January 16. For better or for worse, we are different now.

This campus is perhaps the most poignant example of this change. While the collapsed parking structure and broken Oviatt Library represent the earth's awesome power, the tents, trailers, and more than 25,000 returning students, faculty and staff represent another kind of awesome power. That is the power to pick up and go on. This semester has not been much fun--but it has been a success. We may be a little cranky and dusty but all in all we have benefitted from the opportunity to be a part of this event.

The staff and editors of this Northridge Review would like to acknowledge and thank President Blenda Wilson and her staff for overcoming the inertia of bureaucracy and putting us back on track. We would also like to thank the faculty and their support crew for not giving up even when caught in the middle of chaos.

Finally, we would like to remind the community of what Maya Angelou shared with us when she visited soon after the campus reopened: Study poetry and literature--know that someone else has been there before and has survived with passion, compassion, style, and grace.





John Sanders' Archives

RANDOM LESBIANS

Never having been to New York it is impossible to account for the strange goings on in my life. New York is so incredibly far away and my living room so close that I fail to see the connection. There was a criminal I once knew who stole my VCR and left a love note in its place. She wrote to me later from jail to tell me how much she had enjoyed watching tapes of old movies and that she had just completed her in-jail training to become a phlebotomist. I saw an ad for a quaint 2 + 1 in Arleta and thought of living there with her after her release. Her next letter to me established my fears as she told me that when she got out she was going to New York. At the bottom of the letter she stapled a person-

Tara Kolarek

alized business card made in the jail print shop announcing her position as a certified phlebotomist at New York General. She said there was a group of five women being released together and she hoped I wouldn't mind but she had given them my address.

They were a hardworking bunch of women and never failed to clean their plates and ask for seconds. The jail had been so confining that Los Angeles seemed spacious to them and had an equal effect on their appetites. There were no problems but for once, when one of them ate more than her share of biscuits and another whacked her on the head with a broomstick. She immediately wanted to call the battered women's shelter but the other one quickly made it up to her by buttering her biscuit. One of the women, Miriam, was looking for work and saw an ad for a "bassist wanted" but returned from the interview dejected because she thought they had wanted someone who could fish.

On the day of my 40th birthday the \$5.00 savings bond my grandmother had bought at my birth was to mature and the women planned a surprise party for me. For the occasion they had resolved to dispense with their usual bitchy attitudes and put on dresses. Margo, the largest of the five, had the hardest time finding a dress to fit and ended up cutting a hole in the center of a Queen size sheet and wearing it serape style. Luckily, I had insurance because the sheet Margo chose belonged to Josephine, who had spent a lot of time in the jail weight room, and she sent my couch flying through the living room landing on my new VCR. We all sat around the couch, ate cake and ice cream, and told tales of incest with each one becoming more gruesome and fantastic.

Darlene, who had worked in the jail kitchen, was the house chef and spent most of her days inventing new recipes for Spam. One of her concoctions was a bubbling stew which was very flavorful but we all decided that for our own safety

she shouldn't make it again because it required us to make the house non-smoking for fear of instantaneous combustion. We knew Darlene was hurt by this so we stepped up our efforts at encouraging her culinary skills, as cooking was therapeutic for Darlene and kept her arsonist impulses at bay.

Once, a male-child came to the door and handed Margo a note which read "looking 4 mother" at which point Margo swept him up in her arms and made a pallet on the floor next to her bed for him. He fulfilled Margo's lesbian dream of childbirth without pain. At the time of the male child's arrival there was a D.J. available and another party was conceived. No furniture was thrown but a communal horniness erupted which threatened to overload the D.J.'s supply of Patsy Cline. We all expressed passionate longings for family, motherhood, and sex. The women had had enough solitary confinement in jail as had I in my living room. Getting a babysitter, we dressed in varying layers of leather and lingerie and went out in search of a cosmic orgasm. The search called forth all manner of the long forgotten creative unity of women. No longer were we in search of a roommate; although that's how we would introduce her to family. At first, it was sheer agony, but we each, in our own time, learned how to dance without our nipples escaping from our leather bras.

In time, we hired a personal trainer to school us in the ways of carousing and arousing. We went through at least a dozen before we found one qualified in teaching groups. She was from the South Bay and was concerned about the long commute so she moved in with us. Her first lesson was a lecture on the ways of a deaf culture with which there was no sign language for us to communicate. She was a 12-step lesbian who nightly attended meetings for anonymous heterosexuals. Her living with us disoriented Darlene as the trainer was a vegetarian and could not eat Spam. It disturbed Darlene so

much that she considered psychotherapy but changed her mind when she found that Tofu substituted nicely for Spam.

Our second lesson was on safer-sex which was very enlightening for Josephine who, until then, had thought it meant using silk scarves instead of hand-cuffs. With her newfound knowledge Josephine embarked on a new career of walking the streets in a sandwich board extolling the virtues of dental dams. Josephine had nothing but ongoing fun especially when asked to demonstrate. After several complaints were filed against her with the EPA she turned her energies toward Queer Nation and volunteered as a dead body for their protests.

Peyote, who had earned her nickname, and who, until this time, had lived quietly with us, spending a great deal of time alone in her room making trails with her hands, began to express her lust for me. Before jail she had been a vocalist seeking a voice and now thought that I could be the one to sing for her. Admitting I was biased against drug use and preferring my lovers to see only one of me, Peyote followed the trail back to her room and didn't come out for a week.

Our trainer from South Bay next tutored us in body motion which actually took several lessons until we finally had gotten our sea legs. Luckily, we were able to bypass the condom lesson choosing instead to inflate them and decorate the house for the celebration of the male child's birthday. There was worldwide celebration in our house that day in honor of all lesbian mothers who had been forgotten by Hallmark. For the occasion Darlene made a gourmet meal combining the best of Spam and Tofu. After much speechmaking by Margo we left the male child with Stella, the cat, and went off to Holly's Place for a few beers. Upon our return, we found that the male child had been most adventurous and had tried to rewind Stella's tail in the VCR while watching re-runs of "Petticoat Junction".

Peyote had since come out of her room in search of someone funny with brains, and without my anti-drug bias, to receive her lust. The last we heard of Peyote she had been busted and was doing time in Sybil Brand for shoplifting a blow-up doll.

It was time, our trainer felt, that we should move on to the more aesthetic part of our education and arranged for a charter bus to take us to a showing of dyke art in Santa Monica. The art show was an array of mixed media depicting hate crimes, love crimes, and stolen memories. There was a single woman standing in front of a metal sculpture of two women embracing, impaled on a cross. It was titled "Wanted: women, dead or alive". She turned and looked into my eyes as if to ask "Are you smart enough to never let this become reality?" There was something in that look that was both charming and disarming and when we left she was on the bus with us. The ride home provided relaxing comfort from the tortures of dyke art.

The male child, approaching puberty, began to exhibit unsettling canine behavior and we were left with no choice but to have him neutered. This stopped his pleas for dining from a bowl on the kitchen floor. Margo was the first one to notice the subservient nature of the male child. It was decided that he should be under the guidance of a professional and so it was that Dirk, the valet, came to live with us. Dirk was dependable and in no time the male child was, in the French tradition, serving from the left and removing from the right.

Chartering another bus, our trainer took us to the Nuart for a women in film series. Most of us, only being familiar with snapshots of old lovers, were unprepared for Simone de Bustier's inner child romping across the screen. The next film was a story of star-crossed lovers in which a Scorpio-fem falls for a Virgo-butch but whose families are opposed. The whole

experience left us all feeling anxious and wanting to return to the safety of our home.

Daphne, the woman from the dyke art show, claimed that a writer seeks spiritual fulfillment by not writing as this goes against tradition and it is only by suppressing the desire that one can grow spiritually. I tried this for awhile and found my spiritual self reading books on witchcraft looking for incantations to recite while burning Stephen Dedalus in effigy. The end result was a return to writing and visualizing Daphne's tight buns. She next tried to explain the works of a French philosopher and the concept of killing the author but I shied away from this as I had finally worked through my suicidal tendencies. She accused me of being only concerned that my books sold for at least \$25.00 and not whether there was any content. I tried to convince her this was not true because I was perfectly willing to have them sold at Crown Books and to show her I was sincere, gave her the teddy bear I had gotten at my first writer's workshop. I stayed secluded for several days after this in my little den worrying about my writing and dreaming of philosophers trying to get in and re-write my work. The dreams stopped, finally, after I took all of my writing and bound it securely in Saran Wrap.

Portia came home one day after her weekly session of tarot counselling. She claimed that a near death experience was awaiting one of us. Not completely trusting Portia we went to Puppy Carmona, the numerologist, for a second opinion. Puppy said that it was possible, but that we could prevent this from happening if we would lock onto the sensual nature of our communal living arrangement. This would mean cutting the proverbial apron string which bound us all to our mothers. Fortified by the accumulative total of our body fat we embarked on our search for the sensual. We insured that our gathering would be informal by discarding all jewelry and any clothing with sharp objects. Puppy had warned us that sometimes these journey's left few survivors so we doubled our

body fat and held tighter together. A warm glow started to envelope the group but it turned out to be Stella rubbing against our legs. Trying to speed up the process we each stood back and yelled "here I go" before flinging our bodies in a pile on the floor. This did not have the desired effect as Margo ended up on top while Portia lay on the bottom and indeed Portia did have a near death experience. Three weeks later Portia was discharged from the institute. She gave up her tarot counselor, became a Buddhist and studied the art of Zen.

The dairy industry was looking for a few good milkers so Margo packed up herself and the male child, fired Dirk and left for Wisconsin. The dairy farm she worked at had all the modern equipment and Margo's job was teat monitor. The only delight she found was when one of the rubber suction devices came off and had to be re-attached. I had read in the AAA Tour Book that there was no erotica to be found in Wisconsin. Later, I found out that she had met up with a gorgeous milkmaid from a neighboring dairy who milked the old-fashioned way with her hands. Watching T.V. one night and re-reading Margo's last letter I saw Josephine on the news having been arrested at a Queer Nation protest holding up a sign that read "I still love Martina" while being led away in hand-cuffs.

With Margo, Peyote and Josephine gone the house started to lose its womanspirit. Dusting off an old tube of lipstick I suggested we needed to be recharged. Daphne, 23, fun loving and bored was all for it. We signed up for guitar lessons but found it took too long to learn anything but "Puff the Magic Dragon". Next we trained for marathons but only ended up with shin splints and spandex. We were looking for soul in all the wrong places. Still determined, we hired a Swedish woman skilled in massage. After much discussion of meatballs and no massages, we let her go. Darlene had grown tired of Spam and Tofu and longed for expanding her

culinary skills in the purer methods of Bisquick. Darlene left with a full figured Jewish woman who promised secret recipe's for Bisquick bagels.

It was then only myself, Daphne, Miriam and the personal trainer left, that is, until Miriam rode off one day with a motorcycle club. The personal trainer still had hopes for Daphne and I to get in touch with our goddess in the office. She brought a crypt home and had us each take turns laying in it and concentrating on invoking the goddess of words. Instead, we both dreamed of a Puerto Rican woman in a marketplace uttering words neither of English or Spanish. Next, she brought in a Gay Christian to pray over us as we lay in the crypt together. The Christian ritual being too familiar we realized we were not marriage minded and returned the crypt within 30 days for our money back guarantee.

Our time spent in the crypt, however, did do wonders for Daphne's reluctance to engage in foreplay. We went back and practiced the body motion positions. Position 47 was utter brutality but we were able to put Daphne's leg back in place without calling 911. We never found our goddess but did meet up with a huntress wearing a head dress.

Never having been to New York it is impossible to account for these strange goings on in my temple of heaven. New York is so incredibly far away and my living room so close that I fail to see whether this is a cult or cure.

(to supply missing text for page 11)

permission
 granted I had never
 imagined so fine
unless I could have
 (believed) experienced what I
believed (thought) was not
 real then-- there in
the bus jiggling in
to spring--one expanding
rack of hooks hanging my self
on thirteen years of knowing
loss to capture
 just such green.
no other word. not a synonym
 for, a substitute
but GREEN the hills, GREEN
 the trembling
leaves the colored air
above all flying slopes.

had a painter trapped
 this moment, my heart
had squeezed green
 fluid from (ex plosion)
spring green tree green grass green
chambers.
actually this cavity pumped
 a pain more acquiescent
 to stone conversations

Go

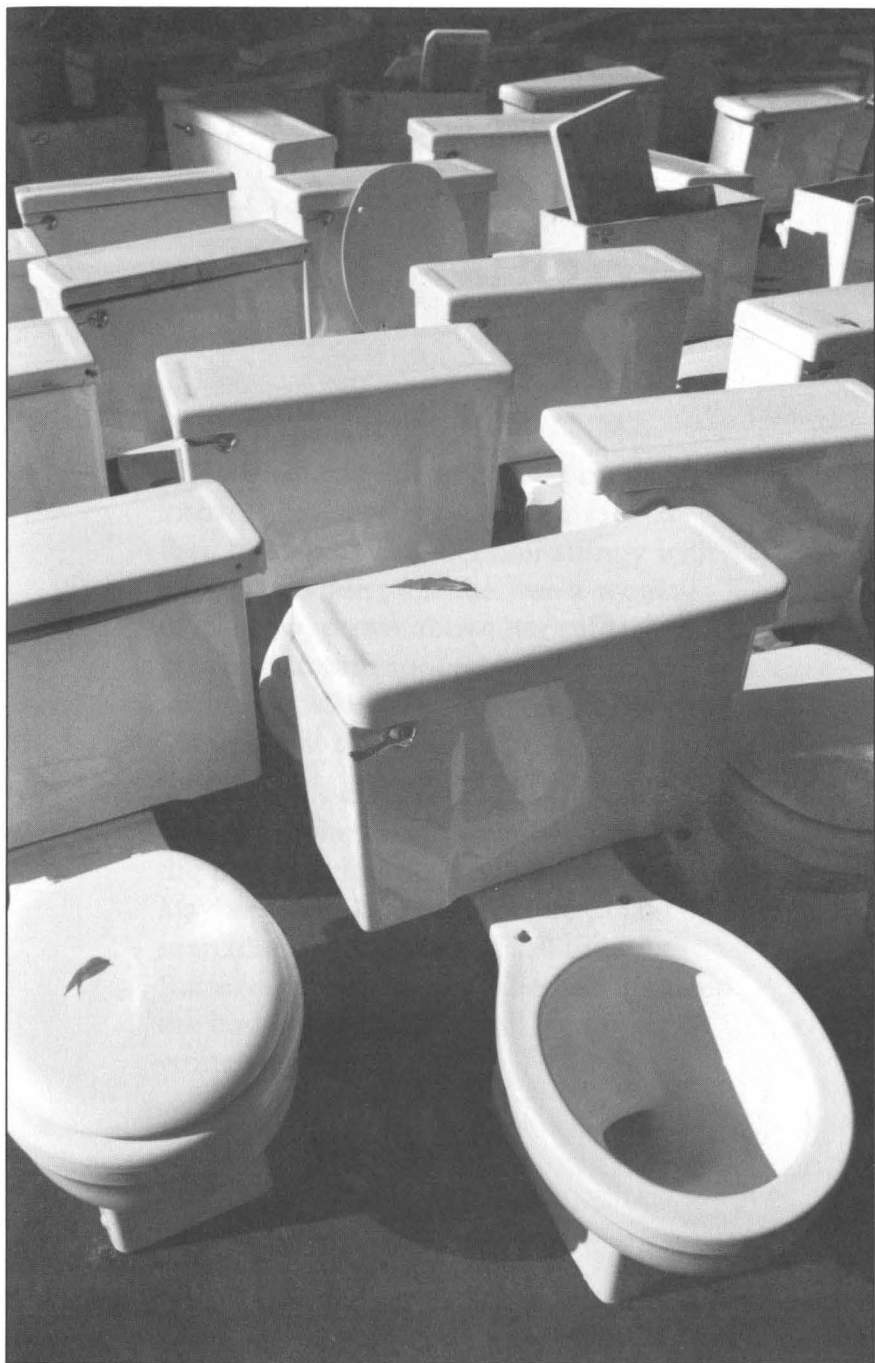
Helen Laurence

permission
 granted I had never
 imagined so fine
unless i could have
 (believed) experienced what I
believed (thought) was not
 real then— there in
the bus jiggling in
to spring— one expanding
actually this cavity pumped
 a pain more acquiescent
 to stone conversations
(than Saturday flirtations and i) knew this
then riding
the crowded bus to some where we
junior high orchestra enroute sure
to win our usual
prizes and what difference did/could this
make to my grief (green raped) me
almost unwilling to taste
 the curve of that hill
against me /my own
curv/ing to craving hills—
all these years

later the festival, shrill
violins tuning against my own
battered cello (tuning
pegs slipping again) my relative
pitch against
the indifference of the boy i thought
i
wanted (he had perfect pitch
played sonatas refused my
craving for
perfection.) yes all those
years and now what
i recall is this:
GREEN
and rosin on the bow
green and flowers some maybe under
spreading oaks with a woman a woman
awoman awomanawomanawoe
manawomanawoman was all even then
i wanted but
i thought
chairs scraping mr. maguire
(without baton) drunk
after concert bows hungry
for my ungiving
breast
i thought
yes, that too, that this
was real and the nonexistent/woman
lying
(i in her arms she in mine) under oaks
cradled
in GREEN did not
live, have our
being not knowing then

that forty years of future
did not exist either (now)
(then) no matter
how vivid the splendid/
terrible day sliced
night (not yet) so
GREEN remains

(remained) until i saw
 signal
light greening (permission
granted to) go



Tom Moran

THE GLOSSING OF A MAN IN THE SIDE ~ SHOW

What she was doing there I couldn't know. I couldn't even see her face at first, hidden among her hair stringy with sweat. I couldn't tell she was a woman until I saw, down above her ruffled brown skirt and spoiled legs, near her unusually wide hips, the smooth inverted triangle that said so.

I had to figure she was confused. Somehow she hadn't seen the sign with the pants on the door when she came in. Maybe a drunk or a desperate junkie searching for a place to fix, I thought. But even then wouldn't she have noticed the bad poetry on the stall door was written by men?

Tom Tapp

Straight:

Julia's a whore/She wants some more.

Gay:

I'm a fag/I like to drag/My big lips/On your big dick.

Religious:

If Jesus was my brother I'd share my wife with him.

When I came in , I thought the place was empty. I didn't hear a sound. It wasn't like when you come in and someone is on the pot and they're trying to be quiet. It didn't have that hushed quality. It seemed empty, like a church. So I walked to the nearest stall and opened.

She hadn't locked the door. When she finally swiveled her head up at me it didn't even seem she knew she was in a bathroom (much less the men's room).

She looked Hispanic, although I couldn't be sure because somehow it was dark in there, in the stall. It contrasted with the white antiseptic of the bathroom at large. She sat how you sit after a long bad day. Her legs were spread wide in a mannish fashion, the way we watch tv and wait for the dinner tray.

"Oh," I said.

Then after a moment like frozen rope around a brittle skating pond, I tried to take control. "Well you really shouldn't be in here, should you? Do you need some help? Here, let me help you."

It was when I moved towards her and she didn't move--sitting, staring--that I caught my first real chill. I got a better angle on the seat where she was and noticed, there, on the dark whiteness, blood.

Maybe she was a patient, I thought. Someone out of her head who had wandered here and hemorrhaged. I was new at the hospital and maybe this was something that happened all the time, something I didn't know about yet. But no, she wasn't clean enough to be from the hospital, didn't have the proper clothes on. She must have come in to Emergency. But what was *her* emergency?

Thinking about it now, I should have gone for a stretcher and some help right then, but for some reason I was caught there in that dark space with her, too close to back away or move. I looked down at my hands and then my turgid green orderly's uniform—that baggy, ill-fitting joke of an outfit they give you and ask you to wear as testament to your cleanliness, sterility.

But I couldn't leave and do things right. So, once again, with a feeling of an icy pond (where did I get that? maybe something from childhood?) I reinitiated my stalled movement towards her; gingerly, as though I might break through the ice.

When I lifted her from under the arms she screamed. It wasn't high, rather low and moaning, but it was definitely a scream.

I tugged at her, trying to get her to help me in all the ways we learned in school, professionally: "Just stand up. Come on, I can't do this alone. You've got to help me so I can get you in to where we can help you."

The screaming died down into just groans and I got her to her feet when it all came forward between her legs in a wet bloody rush: the spiralled cable, blue and gory; the spongy mats of tissue, falling.

Worst was when I realized the anchor, the thing it was all connected to, holding it down, was still below in the toilet and I had to look. There, between the injection-molded

contours of the hospital toilet seat, was something small but so large and pulling neither she, nor I, nor we, could lift it. It had weight in the water and got stuck up under the lip where they scrub with ironwool brushes.

Pulling, I slipped on the blood and water and she flew back down onto the seat. For some reason I started shaking hard. I left the woman and went outside into the halls beeping with voices.

I might have simply wandered, skimming around in my hospital fatigues for days, eventually settling into one of the wings and becoming a patient, someone seen but unrecognized and accepted for who they seem to be because they fill a place.

The first person who noticed me was an old Lithuanian woman who barely spoke English and was in charge of the new staff. She took and stopped me by the shoulders when she noticed me moving downhall, leaning against the cold tile wall. She stared in my eyes and held me at arm's length, bony tight, until I stopped walking.

I had an intense feeling of being scrutinized, searched, but my awareness was elsewhere, near the ceiling, watching from above. A bird circling matted fur on the highway.

“Whatt are you donig? Haillo? Mister?”

She had a large nose that seemed to come at me from the other side of a fishbowl. Blue spots on it. Cancer, I thought.

Soon there was a good crowd around me. Speakers overhead were booming with announcements that I knew had something to do with me. Everyone seemed to be in a huff. All I could think about were the spots on the old woman's nose, and then only the woman in the bathroom.

It was minutes before I could tell anyone anything. Actually I never really told them. All I could do was point. My shaking

elbow jerked spastically like that of mechanical circus-show clown saying, "That way! ... In there!". In fact, to this day, right now, that's all I'm really doing.

Lookin

Shining Bear

How **s t r a n g e** this surfaceworld can be!

Sometime, in the clearin halfway up Takespirit Mountain,
in spring when warmbreath breezes play in
blossoms thick perfumes

and stroke the grasses with their
lovin whisperfingers,

I build fire and set to **Lookin**.

When the treefolk all around smell they can trust,
they lets their leafchilds do the little shines —
like just-bathed by an evening showerain.

Catmother calls “CAUK-CAUK-CAREFUL! BE MINDFUL
WHEN YOU STEP!” to baby walkin there too
near the vinetangles and them bramble traps on
edge of cliff.

Thunderwaters in deep canyon w-a-y- down below slap **hard**
on winter-dozin boulders as they run;
keep callin “**Here’s the place ravine gets smaller—
we’re almost back to Sunmoon lake there
now.**”

My **Lookin** starts by slidin zigzags cross the smooth thick
shadows fillin in the creases of the nearby
mountains skirts with their best black
imagination -- lacquer;
then, on my steady breath, my **Lookin** flies out streaks
on the distant ranges pale as mica in
moon's evening glance;
then my voice cuts in kine-power roar and my **Lookin**
ROCKETS up in gazeship to the fullness of the coverin
sky.

The place inside (just 'bove the belly and below the heart)
that Knows **The Changes**
finds the place I'll go tomorrow for to eat and wash
and pray,
and marks it deep inside my brain; that duty done
loose me to soar
up up to starpasture where all the **Heaven Fourfoot**
graze
and starry Heroes, gods, and cowherds sprays their
milk to mark The Way.

In that mindcuddle my **Lookin** thoughts and fire-fed body
go so still
that in my boneblood I can Feel **All** on the move;
free of manmask, I am now a tiny flair of light con
trolled and guided
by the eon-age Orinda which the maneye cannot see,
the One that pendulums the **Clock of Fate**, and laughs

at ticks
and whirs of the humans tiny tick-tock-tick
and buzzes slavemaster clocks.

In that deep mindfreeze, just one thought alone swims free:

It's all in circles;
A 1 l's round the circles;
go D E E P into The Circle
if you would to Know the *Lookin* Me.





Chris Jurgenson

HEARTS A FIRE

Hearts a fire.

She was dancing. She didn't know why, just moving to some rhythm that she didn't understand until everything changed. It happened so suddenly that it was hard to understand. To understand how just everything there was could change in an instant. Exploding inside were all these feelings, they wanted to come out and it was like they had a mind of their own but she just kept saying, "No. No. You must stay there, stay there, deep inside." It would be so much easier to understand if there was just a reason, something, anything, that could make the things she was feeling make sense. Whatever that was. It seemed to her like a finger painting gone

Julie Coren

all out of control, exploding on to the page, bright oranges and reds, deep reds too. Burning, burning everything.

The picture books were never like this.

They had all those pretty pictures, the books she used to read. Everything came with instructions and everything always worked out just fine, or you could take it back. And get another one. Very misleading the way that everyone always smiled, the way their clothes were always so neat and clean, the way they all looked like each other. The way they fit together. And they would take summer vacations to beautiful places where the water was always so blue, calm and very blue. They would ride on their summer boat with sunglasses, scarves and tans, smiling children, and they would all love each other very much. The way they fit together like pieces of a puzzle, like cracked egg shells put back together, like lockets made of broken hearts that you share with your lover, your best friend. The other half.

Fathers especially have trouble with their hearts.

Indigestion. From too much garlic and wine spilled over pasta that never ends. Clogged arteries get in the way, clogged hearts are even worse. He said it was from too much work, days that never ended and nights filled with responsibility. Only the reclining chair could help. But everyone thought he was absent because he could never hear a thing and would often hide behind the paper. Newstype, columns and columns of newstype. Words that had more meaning than children and their needs. Words that were more desperate than children wanting attention. Words that climbed the page, continuing for hours, offering solitude and respite from de-

mands that were too much. Glasses helped. They made the words bigger, putting them together, offering clarity. They helped him to see just exactly what he wanted to see and never offered too much. Only skewed views worked here. Only moments filled with laughter and pictures offering delight, only whimsy when he was not tired and never tears. They were just all too much those tears. They caused clogged hearts and made him sleepy. Everyone needs a nap.

The savage heart.

He stood before the mirror. Naked. There was nothing there but him and the mirror and the mirror just kept laughing. He looked up, perhaps there was something up there that he had missed, some silly joke that he would understand too, some stupid little bucket filled with water just waiting to spill on him the moment he moved, the moment he tripped the wire. But there was nothing and yet the mirror, it just kept laughing, haunting him. He looked below himself certain that his bare feet were funny, perhaps misshapen and still he saw nothing. All he could do was look harder, see his hair, it was nappy. All he could do was look harder, see his skin, it was dark. And then everything changed, and she was someone else. But the mirror was still laughing because now her skin was savage red, her hair was long and dark, her body bare once again. And memories came flooding back, of too much death and broken families of language she did not understand, of words that assaulted like fists pounding on bruised bodies. Fading in and out the words changed and the skin color lightened, it was dark again. Not deep and black but mixed all the colors of the world and most of all the mirror just kept laughing. Life in America. A dream, and then she woke up.

History books tell stories.

She thought that everything they said was true, and why not, it was in a book, it was written down, doesn't that make it true. History books tell stories, written by master storytellers. Haven't we heard that somewhere before? Master? Oh yes, that goes back many years but we don't have slavery any more. It's in our minds though, culturally, it's who we are, the air we breathe, the thoughts that never creep out into daylight but are still there. We are damaged. Thurgood Marshall said he got tired of trying to save the white man's soul. Are we lost? Do our cities burn with rage of our creation. Do our schools team with death of our teaching. Do our children believe the lies that their parents were taught by their parents. By the history books. By the arrogance of oppression and the absence of respect. There are not many truths in this life.

Stoke the fire.

She went outside to gather firewood, she wanted to make everything warmer inside. All the cold, the way it went right through your clothes into your bones. Deep into your bones so that it was hard to ever really be warm. The moon was standing there, up in the air, balancing everything, holding it all together. She wanted to cling tight to it, to stay there forever and just imagine the stars, listen to the quiet. Inside everything was so desperate. Everything was so mixed up. Everyone was so afraid. Angry too. Angry that so much had been stolen from them, angry that the history books had got it all wrong, frustrated because they didn't know how to fix it. She stoked the fire, she said stupid words, she didn't know what to do. The colors raged and raged blurring everything, messing everything up. Stoke the fire, it is all so very confus-

ing, the way the colors blend then separate, find each other then burst apart. Exploding.

Untamed heart.

Her feet crushed the crisp snow, making noise, squashing what was underneath, pushing all the fear away. She went inside. She looked in the mirror and saw herself beneath the layers, shed of all the lies. "I have to unlearn everything," she whispered into the mirror, touching her lips, outlining her eyes. "I have to see what's in front of me, as it is, only as it is to me." There were scarves all around the room, suddenly they were there, everywhere, beautiful too all their colors and the way you could see through them. And the fire raged. and the room got hot and all the lines gave way crashing the walls that had seemed so impossible before. She began to dance. Wild and ancient, untamed in every way. Rocking only to the rhythm inside, more different than she could ever have imagined.

So much happens when it's quiet outside.

A car drives by with a shotgun peaking out its open window. Whirring by so that the blast rang out in all the silence. And another child died. School books and wild afternoons, football games and hanging. It is school time and another child dies. While she was dancing. Ancient rhythms moan. Desperate streets await the paint as it peels off their buildings and bars fill the windows protecting everything, stopping nothing. It is all outside and it is all inside. And where the paint is slick and alarm systems hum, it is there too. No one is untouched. Ancient rhythms howl. Everything must change

because none of it fits together, no locket or eggshells. Ancient rhythms cry.

Bad dreams.

She awoke to the heat of the fire. Everything had been so beautiful before she went to sleep and she thought that just this once she might make it through the night. Passing through her mind were ancient canyon walls, rust colored, like the earth. The water wove down through the canyons, rushing like it had somewhere to go, and the sky it went on forever. But then all those memories came back, all those days filled with standing on other peoples backs and hurting them. They haunted her. How could everything be so beautiful, the rhythm of the seas, the dark earth. How could it all be so beautiful when there was so much ugliness. It was not working. This trying to sleep through it all. This trying to ignore it. It was not working.

Liquid

Chip Erikson

dulled, and
dependent upon its
own stickiness; your heart
oozes from your short
sleeves,
flowing, lava like over
your striped working-
shirt, puddling on once
shiny black
shoes, you slip in the mess,
pratfalling for
total strangers,
landing,
solid
on your spine,
numbed feet tell you
you probably won't be
taking a bow any time
soon,
all this happens when she
tells you what she tells you,
and the dull ache is behind
your sternum—

heartache they whisper
behind you,
rooted in the protective
coating of
abstraction;
you're laughing now,
on this pavement, as you
start
hearing their
whispers

eventually
you sit up,
hot liquid
stinging your skin,
and eyes, and
everyone's just *waiting* for you;

later,
while you laugh
in little, tender screeches,
they wait
and you smile,
knowing you'll
never get up



Amy M. Lam Wai Man

SAN FELIPE

“Toby? Toby.”

Oh, boy. Toby, in an instant, recognized the voice, the voice, the calling voice, the noise.

I suppose you want to know who, who called out to Toby, that night in his store.

He couldn't hide from her, he knew this. Besides, he thought, he hadn't done anything wrong. There was no reason for him to hide. But that churning in his stomach revealed something different. It was just that he'd been so, so, very busy.

It had always been his nature to be busy, especially when he tried to avoid something or someone. This time, Clementina. Mentina. Tina. Ina. In a moment. Yes, busy. So, so, very busy. As

Amy M. Lam Wai Man

a boy in high school, he maintained an early morning paper route, drilled after school with the ROTC, and worked evenings for an advertising company doing paste-ups. Only at the darkest hours of the night did he begin to immerse himself in homework.

Now in his late sixties, he is lucky if he can stay asleep for more than three or four hours a night. I suppose, you assume, that, now, he should be able to rest, having accomplished so much in his life. Well, did he? I don't know. I suppose, you assume, as well, that I should make something up to tell you, for the sake of the story, of course. Well, I could. But I won't, now. But, yes, I will tell you this. He finds himself aimlessly roaming the rooms of the small apartment, picking up this, touching that, attempting to find something, anything really, to amuse himself if only for a brief moment, for enough brief moments until morning when his current wife can make him breakfast. Not having much concentration, unlike his younger, much younger days, for reading or even for television, he ultimately, succumbing to boredom, sits with the cat, *The Cat*.

Let me also tell you this now. The baby strapped onto Clementina's back grew heavier and heavier as Toby made her wait on the other side of the multicolored, beaded curtains. The baby, their baby, despite their divorce, will in the end, in time, realize that the break-up was inevitable. He, only one at the time, bore sole witness to all the accusations, the denials, the tears, the name callings, the compromises, the frustrations, the promises, and the lies, to each other, and to themselves, at their planned, subsequent meetings at each other's doorways to pick up Henry for his stay with the supervising parent.

“Oh. I didn’t hear you,” Toby lied coming from the stock area into the five-and-dime, carrying boxes, breathing hard, pretending to be oh so, so very busy. Toby stocked mostly items that other shops didn’t, at that time, at the start of the hippie era—mostly peace pins made of wood, mood rings, and of course, bright florescent flower stickers. Some more useful, tasteful than others, some just outrightly on the fringe. This fringe merchandise made his store very popular with the younger crowd. He, himself, although thirty-eight at the time, appeared to be part of the “in” set. It seemed that, although the hippies’ motto was “Don’t trust anyone over thirty,” it didn’t apply to Toby. To them, Toby, the wild cat, hair long, in ethnic black pride clothing alternating with days in large flower patterned tunics, only gave them hope for those soon rounding the corner themselves of thirty.

It was really a quaint shop, so I have heard (or was I told?), situated on the side of a triangular block away from the busy Santa Monica Boulevard, right before it shoots through Beverly Hills and Wilshire Boulevard. The building is still there. I don’t know what it houses now. As I drive by on Santa Monica, I crook my neck, thinking I can see it from the car going thirty or forty, okay, maybe fifty. But I really can’t, thus I have never really seen the store front. But perhaps I should. But maybe I did once in a black and white photograph that Clementina had. But I am not sure. I may have made up this memory in my mind. It very well may have been a shop I would have frequented, then or maybe even now, if it was still open. It was open only for a few years back then in the sixties. Henry was about seven when Toby finally had to close its doors, under the pressure of creditors. I wonder if expatrons remember it at all, if they think fondly of its odor, the coffee, if they remember Toby.

“Toby, we have to talk.” Clementina insisted. Toby’s stomach immediately tied itself up into knots, like the time the principle of the high school summoned him during homeroom with a note delivered by one of those teacher’s pets, who you know as well as I, get away with murder. The note said: “Please see me after school, Mr. DiCola.”, signed Mr. Ripee. He tried hard not to show any weakness as he read the note silently among his friends. I tell you, he probably made up something to tell them, attempting to give off airs of grandeur. Or I could tell you that he might have told them simply that the principle wanted to see him for a misconduct, perhaps, after all, there was some respect to be had for not being a pansie of the school bureaucrats. Or I could tell you nothing. Nonetheless, he waited, sweated for five periods until the last bell of the day rang when he approached and knocked on the frosted glass pane of the door.

Clementina’s ringed hand tapped the glass top of the display case. The ring, the diamond Toby purchased for her in San Felipe, pinged rhythmically, adding to the acid dripping, churning, burning inside Toby’s stomach.

“What’s up? Why are you here?” He played it off coolly. *Show no fear.* “Is something wrong with Henry?”

Once, Clementina and Toby rented a U-Haul, which opened up into a tent (do they still have those?), and they drove it onto the beaches of San Felipe, stopping only once or twice for pee breaks, finally camping along the waters of the eastern side of the baja peninsula. The night was warm. They slept practically naked under the clear sky, after they made love with the intention of conceiving Henry. Or was San Felipe just where Henry was conceived?

Henry and I have been to San Felipe several times, ourselves. Each time lulled back by the wondrous, ripply texture of the sand in the pools left behind by the receding waves,

quarter mile of them, of differing sizes and shapes, warmed by the searing sun and the 103 plus temperature. And for the shrimp tacos. Mmm. The first time we went, the exchange was a hundred thirty seven pesos for a dollar. "Cambio, Senior?" Just several years later, it was over five hundred pesos. Petunia's was the place to go for breakfast, and the rest of the day we survived on Pilar's shrimp tacos. Wait, were they fried in fat?

It is usually anti-climactic, the event, whatever event. planned, pinned with unsurmountable expectations, anticipations. They, Clementina and Toby, were successful in their sojourn. They made Henry. The anti-climax came when Henry was about a year old, strapped to his mother's back, confronting Toby, together.

Henry has developed over the years a relationship with both his parents, separately, as I have. When with one, the other does not, has not usually, asked questions of their former spouse. Clementina does not speak of Toby, yet when she does, her words are not bathed in bitterness. She has realized that he could not own up to the responsibility of being a family man, or a man responsive to a changing, growing woman in the age of liberation, despite his frequent talks of empowerment.

But when Clementina was pregnant, that hot, humid summer of '63, clothed in the only thing that fit, the polyester bathing suit, 'most twenty four hours a day, Toby had been a very generous father-to-be. He swooned over his ballooning wife. She felt loved. She felt beautiful. She loved her large breasts.

Breasts long since returned to their pre-pregnancy cup size, Clementina charged ahead with her much practiced mental

script, “I think we need to separate for a while. We haven’t talked much lately and when we have, that didn’t seem to change things much.”

Bull’s eye! Finally, Toby thought. He had waited, acting in ways that would push her to say these very much desired words. Or was he just being himself? Would you rather I tell you which? I will tell you this. Toby didn’t have the guts to say those words himself. He never did have much in the way of guts, then or now. I would venture to say that he is emotionally arrested when it comes to dealing with conflict. Here, look, he would rather shut down, ignore, deny, warp, and ultimately forget, hoping, testing to see if the others involved have forgotten along with him.

Toby worked eight to four in P.R. at Pratts, where he first met Clementina. Afterwards, he clocked in at the five-and-dime. He usually did not return home until the early morning, after patronizing the jazz clubs and coffee houses. He had kept up this schedule for some months now, partly, as I say, to avoid things that are hard for him to confront emotionally, and partly, as I have said, because he’d always been one to keep busy. So close, finally, to being released from this bond, Toby was impatient with Clementina’s need to talk it through.

“I, we, need more from you...You can’t seem to give of yourself...I don’t want a life of...I feel...when you...would you please...”

It wasn’t that Toby didn’t love them, Clementina and Henry, it was that marriage brought on responsibilities and expectations he was not prepared for, yet he thought that, at the time, he was. Or it might have been that he’d grown tired of being a husband, a father. Or he just didn’t like it much.

Although impatient to the point of fidgeting, Toby knew better than to cut Clementina off short. Her recent personal

growth fortified her in demanding the right to speak and the right to be heard. And over the years, Clementina continued to grow, more and more, even causing the FBI once to pay her a “visit” at Pratts. Nothing serious. She has a file, for sure.

“We don’t want to scare you, Ma’am.”— nonetheless, a not so subtle form of social control.

After she finished, Toby, depleted, had nothing to say but “Oh,oh, okay.” Clementina left him in the dark.

She Tried

Alicia Vogl Saenz

She tried
to leave
her last
lover
in a small
carved teak
box.
(Wood
smooth
as his
skin.)

Did a
ritual
when it
was over,
when he
had said:
"I care for you,
but..."

She put
a full moon,
a few hummingbird feathers,
a ring

in the
box.

Thought:
“Now
it is
over.”

Somehow
at night
he lifts
the lid,
invades her
dreams.

His arms, smell
float to her
like his breath,
transparent.

His weight
capsizes
her bed.
She awakes,
dawn poking
through blinds.
She reaches,
pillow next to
her,
spoons around
it.



Perk

DELIVERY

Chester liked to read. Not books, and certainly not the articles his wife kept pressing on him like “Confessions of a Compulsive Womanizer” or “Jewelry: The Unlikely Ego Booster” or “Beauty and the Beast: How Much ‘Animal’ Do We Really Want in a Man?” But he did like the shape of words on surfaces. He liked the black definiteness of the letters and he liked the way certain kinds of print made the K’s look angry and the D’s look cheerful, accessible, or sometimes fat and foolish. Chester especially liked the way certain directives were so clearly, so confidently spelled out. Take “First Pull Up, Then Pull Down” for instance. That was one of his favorites. Told a person just what to do without any fumbling over pleases or pardon me’s or thank you’s at all. And there was

Melody Stevenson

something about the power of those P's, placed the way they were, that was just about irresistible. Chester wanted to know who had thought that one up. He wanted to know if the author had struggled for years, cutting and revising, until he'd pruned his message down to its purest essence, or if it had just hit the lucky slob upside the head one dark morning while he was busy buttering toast.

Chester wondered if the author still got residuals from each printing. That's what Chester wanted to do. Write something that good, that clean, that potent, then collect residuals on it for the rest of his life. Or even just for ten years or so. Even that much might be enough to buy him a ticket out of the Customer Service Department at Boscoff's Be-You-Too-Full Bosoms, Inc.

Now there was a waste of good ink for you. Be-You-Too-Full Bosoms, Inc. Chester couldn't bear misspellings of any sort, but cute ones really stuck in his craw. And the slogan was even worse, if anything could be, especially since it was poor Chester who had to lift the receiver all day long and greet the unfortunate caller. "Thank you for calling Be-You-Too-Full Bosoms, Inc." he had to say. "We build 'em fast." That "'em" at the end nearly choked him. He tended to slur it all together so that the customer started out confused.

"Better to be confused, than repulsed," was Chester's motto. He'd made that one up himself, and though he recognized that it didn't have the punch of a "First Pull Up, Then Pull Down," for instance, it wasn't really such a bad little motto and he was disappointed that it had never really caught on around the office.

Chester could remember when the company used to be called Harry's Health House. Admittedly, Harry Boscoff had an overdeveloped tendency toward alliteration even then, but Chester (he'd started out as "Product Sorter" in the warehouse) never dreamt what success would do to Harry Boscoff.

Chester had seen Harry safely through a lot of changes. He stayed on through Harry's Beatnik Phase (Harry's Health Hideaway), his Intellectual Phase (Harry's Health Habitat), and his Bill Haley and the Comets Phase (Harry's Health Hop). He even supported the old gentleman through that very difficult period following Harry's divorce when he called the place Harry's Health Harem and insisted that all the secretaries address him as "Harry Honey."

Looking back, Chester could see that he should have jumped ship years ago, but who could've guessed that a ridiculous little hinged hunk of pink plastic would gross more than the rest of Harry's products combined?

Chester remembered it all ... the day Harry discovered that he'd somehow stumbled into success; that he'd somehow tapped into the collective female unconsciousness through their collective female breasts; that the dollars would keep flowing rich as mother's milk, nourishing, limitless, and there for the sucking. That was the day Harry had run through the warehouse, tossing quarters like chicken feed to the workers, shouting "Be-You-Too-Full! Be-You-Too-Full!"

Chester sighed. Still, working for Be-You-Too-Full Bosoms, Inc. had its advantages. You couldn't beat their dental plan for one thing, especially for a man who'd already needed two root canals as well as bridgework. And, after 33 years of devoted service, old Harry let Chester take home free samples to his wife every single time they improved their product, or even just updated their packaging, and his wife always giggled and looked at him sideways when he did. So he really couldn't complain.

But deep down inside somewhere, something offended his soul. Chester had to accept that, finally — that he did have a soul and that something about his job offended it.

He tried not to think about it. But when those thoughts just tiptoed into his mind, bumped right into "Packed with Pea-

nuts,” “Safety First,” and “Sealed For Your Protection,” well, sometimes they were just impossible to ignore. That’s when he would twist his head around backwards to whisper to Lola to tell the old man (if he asked) that he needed to get out and suck up some of the old nicotine. Then he would stack his letters neatly in the lower left hand corner of his desk (with the most irate ones hidden underneath so that people strolling by wouldn’t suspect that he sometimes had his set-backs in the customer appeasement department), quietly peel his coat off the back of his swivel chair, make a quick check that the old man’s door was still closed, and set off in search of Truth and Beauty. He hadn’t actually smoked in years, ever since he read that the Surgeon General himself had determined it to be harmful to one’s health, but old Harry thought he knew everything about everyone and it made Chester feel a little bit vindicated to mislead the old guy now and then.

Chester always used the stairs, making sure to watch his step and to hold the handrail as directed. He had long ago given up on the elevator because it bothered him that those little lights could track him at every stop, no matter what he stopped for. Besides, walking was faster and better for the heart.

The receptionist sat in the lobby, near the front entrance. Chester always smiled and nodded at her as he passed, but she never once looked up. Her hair was beige and frizzy and something about her reminded Chester of a cactus. “Please Ring For Assistance” was posted near a silver bell on her desk. Chester wondered what she would do if he had a stroke rightthere, before he was able to reach the bell.

Chester pushed through the revolving door, grateful that this time at least, no one else was around to make the “One Person Only” directive awkward to observe.

Once outside, he inhaled deeply, scanning the length of the business block, first to the right, then to the left. Ah, to know the direction one must take, he thought, must be the greatest gift.

A limousine with darkened windows rolled past. Chester plunged his hands deep into the pockets of his overcoat. He shook his head, suddenly sad and bewildered. There was nothing inside except cookie crumbs and an old gum wrapper, just the foil part.

He shook his head harder. He was shaking out the sadness and the bewilderment. No matter, he said to himself, but his lips must have been moving again because two girls stumping along in their high heels eyed him curiously as they passed. "It's better to be confused than repulsed," he said to them, nodding pleasantly as he spoke and touching his index finger to his forehead as if tipping an imaginary hat.

But then he couldn't move. He stood at the entrance for a long time. He had almost decided to push his way back through the revolving door and ring the receptionist's bell, just to see what would happen, when a big gold pizza van sailed down the street from the right.

"WE DELIVER" it said in bold red letters. It splattered Chester with mud as it passed but he didn't care. Chester smiled and squinted as he watched the big gold van become a small dark blob.

"We Deliver," he said out loud, and he savored the taste of the words in his mouth, and the feel of their weight on his tongue. The beauty of it, the possibilities, were overwhelming. He turned sharply to his left and his loafers hummed, if not sang, against the sidewalk.

What a gift it was, the greatest gift, to be doubly blessed with a direction and a promise, both! Chester wished he had some quarters to toss. Chester spun around and saw "WE

DELIVER” tattooed on the clouds and on the sun and on the glaring reflection of the Allstate windows. Perhaps they really do, Chester’s soul cried out as he ran faster, faster toward the golden carriage.

But what the hot dog vendor heard of Chester’s soul was a quivery thin voice shouting shaky as if bumping over railroad tracks, “Be-You-Too-Full! Be-You-Too-Full!”

Kickdrum Heart

Lance Dean

- sweet children
it's premeditated spontaneity
finger poppin'
jive talkin
hip rocking
wall to wall floor me horns:

Jazz -
dirty and slick
sliding like a
raw wood talcumed cue stick
shooting my balls
click - click/click
rolling down felt
let me tell you how it felt
sinking into pockets
making me ring
making my nerve endings scat sing
- jazz.

Now,
let me just
stretch this metaphor
like a bass string
and thump on it
for a while...

I mean
you and me
shaking out a rhythm
w/ sweaty slick skin
slap-slapping together
and the Gods themselves
pounding out a backbeat
on thunder drums;

Reach into my soul -
grab my blues by the bone
and drag it out
all boogie buns
in smoky clubs
w/ whiskey voiced gospel
and tribal drums
as saxophones
cry w/ the voice of the damned;
- I mean screaming Coltrane
swinging a wild cat by the tail
smelling all sweat
sex and scorched sax
but rising clear as Gabriel's trumpet
clear-eyed Machiavellian innocence
howling brass serendipity
kicking like a stripper in a titty saloon -
I mean a shiver shake-shaking
jones for you baby,

-Jazzz.

In cognito shades
chewing razor blades
drinking bathtub gin
and snake oil tonic
in a dusty Chevrolet-
parked in back of a madman's jook
shooting craps w/ Mephistopheles
- sharing smokes and trading jokes with
and his Succubustin' prick tease;
farting sulphur and
laughing midnight w/
a sickle-like gold tooth gleam
and a black silk tuxedo
w/ Robert Johnson's soul
pinned to his lapel like a corsage.

I blow on the dice
and rattle them twice-
sweet children let me hear them sing
- jazz.



Chris Jurgenson

1969

I remember when time happened.

It was either yesterday or years ago; of that, I'm no longer certain. But I remember it; it was a part of my life.

I wonder what the rest are doing? I wonder if they ever got back from that place and time, and how they found life again, or if they even knew what it was, or what it was supposed to be like? Reality might have changed for some; now no longer able to distinguish between then and now, between time happening and time vanishing.

The first blast startled us all. We'd been sitting on the edge of some rocks, trying

Terrence Dunn

to keep comfortable, trying to keep a good view and absolutely needing to keep our excitement low. We'd been expecting it, or something like it, for days. Others had told us all the gory stories, so we thought we were prepared. We were wrong.

I hit the ground first, Chuck and Two-eye followed, Davey and C.J. started to go down, but instead changed their minds and stood back up. The rest of the squad I couldn't see -- nor did I care about.

The blasts started coming in steadily; it sounded as though they were ripping through the trees above us. I inched my head up to look around realizing that we probably weren't in any immediate danger; we were very far away from the action.

Nevertheless, I inched it up slowly. Davey was looking straight down at me, his machine gun poised and ready in his hands, its hard plastic handle slightly cracked and already wet with the day's moisture.

"What are you doing down there, you idiots! You should see this; it's great!" he squawked at us.

Before I had time to respond, another explosion sounded. Again my head went to the ground. From the side I could see C.J. holding his gun by the barrel and tip toeing to get a better view over the bushes. Two-eye had gotten up already and Davey was laughing at him and calling him an idiot to his face. An elbow nudged me from the left. "Come on, it's okay," Chuck said to me as he made his way to his knees. "This is what we came here for, right?" Yeah, I had guessed so, but I couldn't help remembering all of the news footage and the body bags, and remembering the people I knew, and remembering how they hadn't come home, how they'd never come home. I didn't want to get up; I didn't want to see it.

"Man! Look at those blasts! How cool!" C.J. yelled. They were mortars; I recognized the sound. "This is just like my dad

said it was for him. It's incredible!" C J. said as he turned around to see if we'd gotten up.

Mortars didn't matter to me; grenades didn't matter to me; machine gun fire didn't matter to me. My dad told me no stories; he'd never said a word. Yet I knew that if I stood up, I'd see something that would clue me in on what his time spent in some far off land was like. My time would then be able to relate to his time. I realized then that I didn't know what I was doing there; I should have been back doing KP or goofing off playing football or reading a book. My time would probably happen sooner or later, there was no need to rush it.

Again I inched myself up. Peering through the bushes I could see the flames rise and the dirt scatter every time an explosion shook the ground. These were the vibrations we'd been feeling all along, the constant thumping that went on in the distance.

Joining the others I now had a clear view of the entire scene. A group of figures had been pinned down on one side with mortar fire hitting only a short distance away. They were men; I could see them. They were living, breathing, moving like real human beings. These were not targets to be shot at a range; these were not stiff bodies to be filmed for the news; these were not numbers. These were reality; these were bone, flesh, blood. "Would you be scared?" Chuck whispered to me.

"Yeah, of course. Won't you be?"

Chuck looked puzzled, "No, um...well, I guess so," he said softly. Yeah, I'd guessed so too, but it didn't matter because that day it was only a game for us, as far as we were concerned the next day it could be real.

The mortar barrage subsided and the squad of soldiers who had been doing the firing got up and advanced. I could see them crouching and running, moving from tree to tree, head-

ing towards what looked to be a rice paddy, always their M-16's set and ready, locked and loaded.

I could almost hear the squad leaders yelling out the orders, "Let's go! Move it!" or, "Come on men, let's get them!" This was their chance to prove themselves, their chance to learn something, their chance to learn how to survive. I remembered the games we'd played back in the world before we got here. Chuck and I had ambushed the enemy so beautifully. We cut them down without a thought, laughing hysterically the entire time. Then later, we got caught and shot at ourselves. The torn knees of my fatigues being the only scars of my heroic death fall.

Again an explosion sounded. The men who had previously been pinned down by mortars had advanced and were now out of sight having reached a tree line which stretched out in both directions about twenty meters in front of the rice paddy. An ambush was about to unfold.

"Do you see that? They're going to get blown away!" Davey yelled. "We should help them!" came from Two-eye. I couldn't understand them. Most of their dads had probably seen things like this and told them about it's reality; some, no doubt, were still seeing it. Davey and C.J. both knew Suzie Hollander and Joey Fernandez back in the real world. Both of them knew what happened to their dads, yet this was all still a game for them. Time here could not be matched with time there; the connection was unavailable to them.

Machine gun fire suddenly filled the air, overpowering every movement and sound. Trip flares were sprung, claymore mines exploded. The surprise had been unleashed just as the entire group had entered the rice paddy. As I looked across I saw bodies hitting the ground. Men were twisting, turning, yelling in pain, yelling in disappointment. Some were better at it than others, as if this was the part they'd practiced for. Their arms would fly back in surprise, their backs would arch up, as they

were pulled onto their tiptoes, their helmets flying off into the air. Then they would twist their bodies and go limp falling onto their sides into the soft leaves or dirt; M-16's bouncing left and right.

"I think I've had enough," I said to Chuck. "We should have been back hours ago as it is." I was lying, but I needed an excuse.

"Yeah, I'll go too. I've got some things to do," he said in a hushed voice.

With the ground still vibrating, machine guns still firing, and men still falling and screaming, we turned to sneak away from our squad.

"Hey, where are you jerks going?"

It was Davey; we'd been caught. "Ah...we gotta get back, um, Chuck has KP to do," I said while we continued to walk away.

"Yeah, right! Well, go ahead! We don't need you guys anyway!" As Davey said this, his machine gun slowly became angled straight at us; then the rest of the squad followed. Davey's yellow hair was sticking out the side of his helmet, his cheeks were red and blushed, a small mist was coming from his mouth, and his eyes had turned ice cold. He'd seen something that he thought looked like fun and it'd brought out the worst in him. Time for us, the time we had known in our old world, then stopped. "Come on men, let's get them!" he yelled.

As Chuck and I turned and ran down the dirt path, the sound of their mis-aimed gunfire could barely be deciphered from the real battle in the background. Feeling that our lives depended on it, we ran full tilt, leaping over rocks and logs, smashing through piles of leaves, hurdling bushes, our hearts overbeating the entire time.

“What’s wrong with those guys?” “Why did they open up on us?” “Why did I go up there anyhow?” “Is it my fault I couldn’t take that sight?” And other thoughts blurred in and out of my consciousness. Then, catching up with me from the back of my thoughts, time remembered to switched itself back on. I knew that I couldn’t help what I was doing; here and there, I had just learned, could mean the same thing.

The squad gave up on us shortly; they didn’t want to miss too much of the real show they’d left behind. Then, when we knew we were in the clear, Chuck and I slowed down our pace. After a while the fence came in sight, and then the road and the town beyond it. I could see the smoke coming from the chimneys, and the smell of fireplaces now filled the crisp autumn air. We slowed down and walked now, finding our way to the hole that would take us through the fence and back into the safety of our neighborhood world.

“So...my dad goes over there in January. What about yours?” Chuck asked me while climbing through the hole.

“Um, January too... He goes over there again in January,” I responded. After making it through the fence and down to the road, the ground again shaking with the sounds of the distant explosions, I turned around and saw the familiar sign which I had been passing each morning on my bus ride to third grade. “Combat Training Center - West Point, New York,” it read. “January,” I thought to myself, “He goes back again in January.”

Two Fathers

Shining Bear

The First

As I rais'd father onto the death-rack, I looked;
One in him I knew — the one who did always his duty;
One I knew not — the one who hid his secret dreams.

As I lay sojourner-son down onto his rug, I look;
One in him I know — the faithful son who does his duty;
One I know not — the son who lives with secret dreams.

O my son, I would not live with yet another stranger!
Tell your dreams; and if I do not understand
I yet will honor them as coming from a stream that's clean.

And dare I tell you mine? If that piece of me I give,
I tremble thinking of your seeing my young inside
where smokes keep power songs afresh, and puzzle pictures
live.

The Second

Father-friend: I see regretted memories now mist your eyes
when speak you of the grandfather you set upon the rack;
your voiceless voice says that he told you no dream-sharing
talk.

Have his secrets and yours been born into my blood?
Is that the pow'r commands me walk a separate path,
that bids me cross the path you'd have me tread?

My heart beats with but pure purpose; no defiance
rings my ears when I say "This is how I must walk
as Manitou does guide." I say, although I dread.

I claim not wisdom to be call'd an elder of the tribe;
but I must trust that medicine that deep inside compels
my feet to walk the dream path — yours and his now mine.



Chris Jurgenson

City Terrace Field Manual

Sesshu Foster

Prose Poem Fragments

Sixto Tarango (1957 - 1987) died a few Septembers ago, and his wife took the kids and moved to Bakersfield. But one day I saw Sixto standing there on the sidewalk in front of a house on a residential street. He was looking pretty sad, big and dark and lonely. After his Dad died of a heart attack when Sixto was eight, he had always been prone to moodiness. It looked like another bout of self-doubt and frustration. He always came out of it with a winning smile. Like in the 70s, president of Cal State L.A. Student body and a big Afro, watching the Chicano movement go down in flames. Nowadays if I mention him to someone, they'll say, "Sixto? I thought he was dead." "Yeah, that's what they told me, too." Sixto and I shook hands and he invited me into the house, which turned out to be gloomy and vacant, without electricity or running water, the late afternoon sunlight dappling the windows. Even Sixto reflected the Colorado-colored loneliness of the cottonwoods. He had a lot more on his mind than he could say. I told him what was obvious: "Everybody thinks

you're dead." He gave me a pained look. "I have AIDS. I have no friends any more. I can't find a place to stay, that's why I'm out on the street now, looking for a place to stay. Nobody wants anything to do with me. They know it's gonna be bad. It ain't right, the way people are treating me. You know I always treated people right." "You did," was all I could say, nodding, "You always did." Then he shrugged, as if to shrug everyone off his back, and he looked around at the empty house. "I just need a place to stay." "I'll help you find something," I promised. We talked as twilight fell like a shadow on the room. And it was years later as I woke in the early morning sunshine coming through the cottonwood leaves into the second story window in Durango, Colorado.

Arturo ran that way and disappeared into the afternoon. But at 4 AM the signal on the corner of City Terrace and Eastern blinks red, silent off and on. The intersection is black and empty, but shining under a galaxy of streetlamps as if all the unending light, gases, energies, and the vast emptiness of the universe stops there at the intersection of City Terrace and Eastern, comes to this edge at a red light blinking off and on, and crystalizes into the shapes of night, these parked cars and an asphalt island with a broken concrete bus stop bench kids knocked down, treetops, the dark rooftops of apartments and houses. As if the shining black asphalt and gleaming steel and the glass of windows without people looking out of them absorbed and were constituted of the emptiness of space and the spiral lights of dead galaxies and the dark forces of unseen stars. Forever. But that's just appearances: time moves,

the universes spin off in different directions. A car makes a rolling stop at the light and left turn, heads toward the freeway. A drunken guy, only a kid as it turned out, comes down the long hill of Eastern Avenue north just past the former fire station inhabited by a Vietnamese family. He's roaring down the hill in an old black Camaro. He must have been having a hell of a night, or a hell of a week. Maybe he sees the red light too late, and his brakes fail. He veers to the right. Or maybe he never saw it. Maybe he was asleep, and thought he was dreaming about it. He slammed into the back of those parked cars at more than 70 miles an hour. They said death must have been instantaneous. We all heard the explosion. It happened right in front of Eddie's House, and he said they all knew what it was. It was the second time in 2 years. Everybody ran out to see whose cars got hit. The Camaro was spun out in the street, only half a car lying on its side with the kid's body still mostly in it. And the cars along the curb had accordianed into a big mess all jammed together, sprinkled with sharp beads of glass. From our house on the hill, I heard the sirens and watched the cop cars and the fire engines arrive, and even the towtrucks had their lightbars on, all the vehicles working for hours to clear the intersection with red and white lights flashing in every direction. Eddie said how everybody was talking about where they could park their cars and how it was the second time in 2 years. I told Eddie I think space only feels empty and the night only looks quiet. Sure, Eddie said. Somebody's going to sleep through it all, I guess, I said.

Urban Unrest

Tom Moran

Behind a bolted window,
I lie in sultry darkness.
Thin sheets cling randomly.
I'm discomfited by disquiet
and the vague feeling I
need to piss.

Over the aluminum channel
and through the venetian blind
(the one that never falls in place)
comes the jangling clamor
of a rambling shopping cart,
pushed by a refugee
scouring the blue light.
Further out,
a wailing ambulance
dispatched
to some ruinous mishap.

A car alarm erupts nearby.
In a distance three
gunshots, a Cadillac
becomes a casket.
Sweeping daylight explodes,

the walls revolve into
a shadowy centrifuge.
The rotors pound the
exhaust through every crevice,
burning the blackness.

Downstairs, Sam threatens
to finally kill the bitch.
Through the drain
muffled pleading
echoes from the porcelain.
The wall on which my head rests
booms under
the thump of matted hair.

I roll over,
momentarily cooled
by the dampness of
my fossil impression.
Again my room thunders,
the door slams below,
perhaps at last
unhinged.

Outside, shattering glass.
A car window, a bottle,
or a pipe
fallen from numbed fingers
blindly foraging
among the blackened shards.
Another car alarm
sluces down the alley
surging over graffiti,
into the canyon of
urban cliff dwellers.

Another round
tears from its chamber
finding home
somewhere soft and
sudden.

Elegy ~ in Memory of Brian

Carrie Etter

Imagine: cutting a hole out of the sky's dome
with an ice pick. Clambering through the opening,
sitting on top of the hard, colorless fiberglass,
Indian-style, expectantly. The entry disappears.
Birds fly close, underneath, but you cannot touch them.
The air has no taste or smell.
Suddenly, you understand that I
put the ice pick in your hand, that somehow I
brought you here.
This is how I feel without you.



Chris Jurgenson

SAN FELIPE, GECKOS, AND MESCAL

**“Finally, there is the most basic
desire: To make some sort of contact
with the rest of humanity.”**

Dr. Roland Furst

It happened this way:

Edited Journal Entries for the week of
7/15-7/20

Sunday 9:00 pm

Nothing is happening. No prospects, I
mean. Whenever my prospects are this
non-existent I find myself on the fold-out

Chip Erikson

bed, drunk, watching *Jai-Lai* on the Brazilian station.

(Last week I had a dream that if you chewed Cheetos fast enough, then inhaled the dust, you could *exhale* it through your nostrils; thereby sending smoke signals through the atmosphere to those you need to contact, but don't want to call on the telephone)

I'm on the fold-out, drinking Pabst, and inhaling Cheeto dust. Earlier, I wrote these lines:

etched
over the terrain
of your
boundless angst;
an extinguished spark
you named "love"
but couldn't
speak

I wrote it for Gab. I write everything for her, which, I guess, gives me an unlimited range of possibilities for material.

10:00 pm

No prospects. It feels like an over-confident, carnivorous rat is sneaking up on me, knowing that I'm mentally, physically, and spiritually incapable of fighting back. I haven't written

anything for two weeks now (except the above) and rent is due in a week. I *know* I could've gotten a job at the petting zoo next door if I didn't have these goddamn tattoos.

I didn't start writing tonight because I couldn't find a fucking pen. I think there's one under my fold-out couch, but I'm not moving the couch tonight. By the time I found this pencil I forgot most of the story I was planning to write. I remember there was an obese baby and a woman that looked like Jacqueline Onassis, but I can't remember how I was going to tie them together. *Fuck!* I'll start it tomorrow...

10:15 pm

I have to get out of here. Inactivity, stagnation... my essential motivating processes have come to a screeching halt.

Kerouac's characters never really found anything on the road, but that wasn't the point: It's the moving that counts. Motion, somehow, restores one's balance. I tried doing the log-roll around my apartment once (*stomach to back, stomach to back, reverse before you hit the coffee table! back to stomach, back to stomach...*) but I had to stop when my downstairs neighbors started banging on their ceiling with something metallic.

The theme of tonight's journal: *Motion restores harmony...*

Special note: I've lived in Reseda for twenty-seven years, which also happens to be the amount of time I've been alive.

It just occurred to me that *Reseda* is a Spanish word. Loosely translated, I think it means “no escape.”

11:35 pm

I think I blew some Cheeto dust out of my nose just now, though I might've been imagining it through this interminable, but pleasant, “Blue Ribbon” stupor. Whatever the case, it wasn't enough for a smoke signal. There's a certain amount of Cheeto mush collecting in my lungs, and I'm vaguely aware that I might be committing a slow, strange suicide.

The phone just started ringing.

Fate, coincidence, and irony all scare the shit out of me, so there's no way I'll answer it.

Besides, it sounds like an evil ring. In the space of six of these evil rings, I imagine what an evil phonecall would be like, so I mentally organize a partial list while staring at my black princess phone:

- 1) Someone has made a *videotape* of me engaged in some nefarious act, and now they want blackmail money.
- 2) My former second-grade homeroom teacher is now a vicious serial killer, and she's killing her way through the '74 yearbook.
- 3) My lithium prescription has run out,

and they want the remaining pills back.

- 4) A relative is calling, and I can't, for the life of me, remember who the person is.

Only the last two seem plausible, though many of my neighbors *do* own video cameras.

The suspense is killing me. Plus, if it *is* something negative, at least it's something...

I pounce on the phone like a mad-dog, ready to confront whatever dark force is there:

"Hello."

"It's Gab. Why didn't you answer the phone?"

"I wasn't sure if I should."

"Making one of your *lists* again?"

"A short one."

Gabriella's voice is rough. When it's bad, like when she's hungover or drunk, it can actually make you wince.

“Did you get that job?”

Her larynx must be forged out of rusted tin. I ponder this for a split second, then answer:

“No.”

“Then you can come with me. Pack something, I’ll be right there.”

This is the essence of Gab: Always on the move. I was lucky she called this time. She usually just drives over and throws clumps of dirt at my window to get my attention.

Monday 1:23 am (in the Cadillac)

*Curious, and curiouiser...*we’re in Gab’s ’71 black Caddy, hurtling down the 405. Our destination: San Felipe, Mexico. I’m curled up on the Cad’s shredded, black vinyl seat while writing this. Gab has a nude Ken-doll suspended from her rearview mirror...swaying, swaying, like a miniature scaffold above the car’s dashboard...

She got to my house an hour ago (actually, closer to 12:00). Walked in with two forty ounce bottles of Mickey’s Malt Liquor. One, hers, was three-quarters empty. She noticed the heavy layer of Cheeto dust blanketing the fold-out.

“What’s been going on in here?”

“Just — I don’t know — experimenting with different carbohydrates.”

I wanted to explain the process to her, how (with the help of a popular snack food) I could communicate with her on another level...but she didn’t seem interested.

“Hmm.”

Then, without pause, she was on to the next idea:

“We need money.”

We’ve always assumed a sort of tacit partnership. I could not tell you when we started this habit, though.

“What’s the plan?”

I knew she had something vaguely worked out. She chugged from the bottle before speaking.

“Lizards. We catch these *gecko* lizards in Mexico and bring them back here. This guy over on Sherman Way owns a pet store and will buy them from us.”

“Do we know how and where to catch lizards?”

“They’re fucking *lizards* — I should hope we could just out-smart them. We get *twenty dollars a-piece for them*. We’ll find a way.”

I didn’t then, and I don’t *now* believe that the lizards were actually *Geckos*. They were some other type. But still, this sounded like one of Gab’s more plausible plans. And I had no more money or prospects. I did, however, like the idea of being on the move. Being with her didn’t hurt matters, either. I packed a bag.

4:20 am (Cadillac time)

We’ve made it through most of San Diego. It seems hotter down here, even at this time.

Here’s a partial list on Gabriella, in case I haven’t written one in here before: 1) She’s tall and angular, with lean, tight muscles — she reminds me of a lightweight boxer, without the scar tissue, 2) There’s a tattoo on her back (a demonic-looking parakeet with a dagger clenched in its beak) and a *tribal* tat around her left arm, 3) She possesses an obscure, dark sense of humor that occasionally borders on the exotic and dangerous, and 4) She’s running with wreckless, inexhaustible abandon towards *something*, though I’d be hard-pressed to identify what that something is.

7:45am

Gab blazed past the border patrol and I was worried they were going to pull us over. Then again, they're not worried about what goes *in* to Mexico.

It's already hot. Gab took off her t-shirt and is driving in her black bra. I haven't met many girls who do this, but, oddly, it seems okay when she does it. Also, she drives with her left boot resting on the dash, like she's constantly trying to push the seat back. *She hates to be cooped up in the car.*

8:30am

Fucking hot. Waves of heat, like evaporating liquid glass, are rising out of the pitted asphalt, rising towards the pale, sun-bleached sky. The sun sucks the color out of everything down here. It also makes things move slower: the people, the cars, the shimmering heat waves from the asphalt...

8:30am (cont.)

Gab is sober now, and it's making her antsy. We had breakfast in Rosarito and the tortillas and carne asada sucked all the booze out of her stomach (usually she doesn't eat to prevent this sort of thing from happening). She told the waitress that she "puked all over the bathroom" and the

waitress let us leave without paying. We had some kind of strange conversation during the meal, only part of which I remember. She started with:

“What would it be like if you and I were boyfriend/girlfriend?”

I felt a bubble form in my stomach. Maybe it was an alien, and I'd soon be on my back, on the table, thrashing wildly as it ate its way through my gut.

“It might...alter our friendship.”

Couldn't believe I said that. There's something in our relationship, a symbiosis, an organic process that seems to be in continuous evolution; whatever it is, it defies a simple breakfast-time explanation. She, too, couldn't fit any words with the concept:

“Sometimes I think about you and I just want to reach out and...grab you by the face or something.”

She reached across the table and squeezed my cheek, hard. Salsa squirted out of the corner of my mouth, and speckled her sunglasses which were lying on the table.

Her eyebrows arch when she's frustrated, and her voice, I don't know...*huskifies*.

“I just...ahhhh! This is so fucking hard to explain. Let’s go.”

Odd conversation, but it somehow addressed something we constantly hint at...

9:40 am

We’ll be in San Felipe within the hour. The Cad rumbles over the scalding asphalt, a dusty black bullet train with its two half-naked occupants (I’ve taken off my shirt, and Gab is down to her boxer shorts and black bra). I wonder what the people on the side of road think of us — is this the image that entices them to go to America?

We stopped at a liquor store and bought some Mescal. The guy in the store was surprised to hear her speak perfect Spanish. I guess they’re not used to twenty-five year old Mexican-American girls with bleach-blonde hair and tattoos.

9:55 (outside San Felipe)

We're working on the Mescal. It tastes like bad gin that was processed in grainy dirt. The worm at the bottom is fat, completely saturated with alcohol.

The first time we tried Mescal — one night we were walking the streets of Reseda and decided to drink an entire bottle before going home — Gabriella told me about it:

"The Mexicans say that if you drink enough of it, and you have a good heart, you can actually see people's souls."

I had no idea what to say to this, but I wanted to be a part of the conversation.

"Souls of living or dead people?"

She thought for a minute, then fished the worm out of the bottle, bit off half, and handed the other half to me.

"Is there a difference?"

She chewed her worm carefully, I swallowed mine like an oyster.

"I guess not."

San Felipe (notes for entire day, written on Tues. night)

What a day! This is *it*, where everything comes together. Gab and I saw our future today and for once it wasn't bleak. Realizing financial stability is a visionary experience of sorts: Visionary in the sense that you can finally look at yourself without cringing.

The lizards wanted to be captured. That's the only way I can explain it. The events of the day are best organized in a list:

Our San Felipe Gecko Adventure List:

- 1) We arrived at the outskirts of town. Gab parked near a small hill, reasoning that the lizards would be sunning themselves there.
- 2) She was right. I think she's some sort of reptile divining rod.
- 3) Gab got behind the bushes/rocks with a stick, and literally beat the lizards out of their hiding places. When they scurried out, I was waiting on the other side with a shoe box and towel. I transferred the lizards from the box to an ice-chest we had prepared with dirt and small bowls of water.
- 4) We started drinking Mescal at 3:00. By 4:00 we decided that we should use *fire* to maximize our reign of terror, so I siphoned gas from the Cadillac; eventually, I managed to

create a raging, though short-lived inferno over the dirt and rocks. (captured ten lizards via this method)

5) I watched Gab march over the blazing earth in her black jeans and tank-top, with her multitude of earrings and bracelets reflecting sharp light from the Mexican sun; marching like some kind of eternal, punk-influenced Nazi stormtrooper, dripping sweat, lighting fires, pillaging the vast Gecko village with her fierce intensity.

6) What kind of relationship can we have? There's no way I can even partially absorb her spirit. There's too much, it would overlap my own.

7) We caught 37 lizards. If Gab is right about the price we'll get, everything is set for me. Food, rent, bills: My valley existence will again be sustained.

8) These are not Geckos.

9) We don't know how to care for these lizards, so we've decided to return to the states in the morning.

Late night, Tuesday (written on Wed.)

When we eventually slept we did so on the ground, outside the Cadillac. We had a campfire, a huge one, it was like being in an episode of *Bonanza*.

The lizards were in the trunk, in the lizard-chest. They're very strange looking — enormous, lidless eyes, clawed feet, iridescent green...they have all the qualities necessary to be little superheros...*look ma! It's Geckoman!*

The first Mescal bottle was empty and we were working on the second. I had an incredibly strange experience. It happened during our campfire conversation, which went as follows:

“This is our new business, Nick. We're the next great entrepreneurs. If this were legal, we'd eventually be in magazines and entertainment/news shows like *Hardcopy*.”

“Yeah.”

Something, I'm still not sure what, fell out of my mouth and landed in my lap. I was too dizzy to look down.

“You're drunk.”

She put her boot next to the fire. The flames reflected off the black leather, making little orange light coronas dance and wiggle over the legs of her jeans. They looked like little ghosts, or parts of a larger one. I needed, somehow, to convey this image:

“I think I see your soul.”

“My *soul?*”

And the orange wasn't just reflecting off her boot anymore, it was seeping out from beneath her clothing, glowing through the porous fabric of her jeans and tank-top like light from some kind of super-charged jack o'lantern.

"Nick, are you okay? Why don't you lie down...?"

As she spoke, orange light seeped out of her mouth and began swirling slowly around her body and head.

I kept my eyes on her as I lay back, trying not to hit the ground too hard. Something was coming out of my mouth, seeping out of the corners. I opened my mouth wide and *blue* light began rising from it, swirling over my head and body like an illuminated gaseous cloud.

"Nick..."

Concern in her voice. Never heard that before. She lay down next to me, rubbing my arm.

"Are you alright?"

And our lights began rising in the air together, intertwining, twisting, stretching like an orange and blue rope into the sky.

I watched it stretch, getting thinner and longer, and finally I couldn't see the end of it, but I had an idea of where it ended, and it wasn't heaven or hell or purgatory or nirvana or reincarnation, but *right here*, in this moment, in San Felipe.

Then the rumbling started, like the biggest quake I've ever been in, like the one that will eventually give Nevada a shoreline. Peeking over the hill — I couldn't see its body — was a gigantic Gecko, hundreds of feet tall, judging by the size of its head. It's green skin glowed with a green light, so bright I had to squint.

It stared at Gab and me, and I could see us stretched out by the fire in the reflection of its lidless eyes. One huge, clawed foot was gripping the edge of the hill. The lizard opened his mouth slowly and I discovered that I really didn't care about what I thought he was going to do.

Instead, he spoke.

"You."

"What?"

He mocked me, imitating my voice. The Rich Little of Lizards.

"What? What? Did you really think you'd find something here? Did you really think you were different from anyone else? You're absolutely pathetic. Then again, I should've known what to expect from somebody from Reseda."

He looked at the entwined lights, roping their way past the stars.

"Here's your dream."

He passed his claw through the light, and it immediately diffused, broken into billions of particles. In seconds the particles disappeared, and there was nothing but clear, black night above San Felipe.

I wanted to scream at him, kick him, put him on a spit and roast him slowly...Then I think I understood him and that was somehow worse.

He looked at me a second longer then withdrew his head. I heard him rumble back to wherever he came from.

Wednesday, am

I woke laying in the dirt, next to the Cadillac, with my hands tied behind my back. My face was covered with dirt and I had the rusty taste of dried blood in my mouth. I struggled to a sitting position and noticed that my feet were tied too.

Gab was sitting on the windshield of the Cad, sunning herself and drinking from the bottle of Mescal. The lizard chest was on its side, next to the front of the car. Empty.

Someone touched my shoulder. I attempted a scream, but what issued forth was more of a parched, soundless, *Haaaaa!*

A man was bending down, staring into my face. He was at least sixty, but the deep cracks in his dark brown complexion

made him look somehow...ancient. *Here he is, a typical farmer from San Felipe. At least I'm being exposed to some of the culture down here. Ten bucks says this guy doesn't have any teeth.*

He smiled, revealing two flawless rows of pearly whites. In that nano-second I realized that I really didn't know anything about these people and their land. *Why the fuck did I think I had the right to come down here and steal their wildlife?*

"Senorita."

His voice was actually soft and rather pleasant (yet another inconsistency with his appearance — this was starting to annoy me).

Gab jumped off the hood and stood over me. She looked down at me and shook her head.

"What got into *you?*"

"Muy loco. El mescal es muy peligroso."

I don't speak Spanish so I didn't even look at him.

Gab was dripping sweat on me. I didn't want any in my eyes, so I stared at my jeans. I remember, for some reason, watching the sweat drops make dark spots on my 501's, then dry quickly in the already scorching Mexican sun. Eventually, her sweat would evaporate, become rain, and land on some-

one else. I thought, *Gabriella is eternal*. I felt better knowing this.

“You *completely, completely* freaked out last night, Nick. If I had my gun I probably would’ve gut-shot you. You drank way too much Mescal.”

“Mescal. Muy loco.”

I could take only so much from this guy.

“Who the fuck is he?”

“This is his land. Someone told him there was a fire and he came out. *He* actually tied you up. Good job, I might add...you should’ve seen yourself last night, Nick...screaming and shouting about souls and Geckos...”

I was staring at the empty lizard chest.

“What happened with that?”

“This is the craziest part. You pulled it out of the trunk, dumped it out and began screaming at the lizards. At one point you grabbed two of them, held them close together and screamed something like, “You will *never, never* understand each other...*you can’t, we can’t...*” Then you turned on *me*, screaming, “Who the fuck are you Gabriella, who the *fuck* are you?” You really

scared me Nick, and then *this* guy showed up, and he thought you were attacking me, so he knocked you out.”

“How?”

“With his fist.”

I’d been punched out by the Latin American counter-part of my grandfather. Great.

“You crazy, with Mescal. No Mescal, good peoples.”

He smiled and walked to his truck. Before getting in he said something to Gabriel in Spanish.

“What?”

“He’s sorry we lost the lizards, but he says they don’t like it in America anyway. It’s too noisy.”

The old man got in his truck and left.

Gab untied me and we got in the Cadillac.

(Friday 10:00 pm)

Back in the apartment.

I'm on the same spot on the fold-out, nursing a Pabst and munching on the Cheetos. The trip actually sparked something inside me, and I've been writing like mad. It'll be a short story, I'm guessing. Something about Geckos, Mescal, San Felipe...

Gab is moving to Vegas. She has a friend there who's going to teach her how to deal Blackjack. The way she described it, it sounded like a lot of money.

She wasn't that upset about the lizards, anyway. Turned out, the guy wasn't going to pay us more than five dollars a piece, and *that* wasn't even for sure.

Oh yeah, I got the job at the petting zoo next door. I wear a blue, long sleeve shirt that covers up my tats...today, before closing, I stared at the goats. They can look at each other (and other animals), for hours, and never register any kind of discernible emotion. They seem to realize that their presence among other goats really doesn't mean anything, that they'll never achieve unity with *anything* outside of themselves. Or maybe they don't realize this, and live lives of uncomplicated, unaffected bliss. Who knows what goats think? I don't, and I work with them all day.

One more thing — I finally figured out how to do it! I wasn't inhaling right, but now I have it, and with practice I know I'll perfect it.

As soon as I could do it, I leaned out the window of my apartment, and sent a plume of Cheeto dust into the Reseda-night sky, hoping it would reach Gab before she left for Vegas.

CONTRIBUTORS

Shining Bear

Well, the simple is that no one no more teaches childrens how to SEE. So we grownup children all stumble through our life half-blind, and miss near-all the wonders and the Mystery. Some few Elders still knows how, and I hope my writin here will call em out and getem teachin them Old Ways once again.

Amy Conger

CSUN graduate & therefore underemployed but very talented graphic artist, currently living in San Francisco and planning to create magnificent books.

Julie Coren

and in between the stories there is living.
i dream of writing words, of finding words, of clearing dirt
and etching in the stone.
a kind of living made from words.

Lance Dean

Lad Dense was once an apt description but I'm no longer as young as that is misspelled. Lance Dean is a tortured artist that desperately needs your gifts of alcohol, sex and drugs to ease his creative anguish that you could never hope to understand. Lance Dean is the writing pseudonym of Naomi Judd.

Contributors

Terrence Dunn

Terrence Dunn is believed to be missing in action.

Chip Erikson

Chip Erikson is still in shock after winning the 1993 Northridge Review Fiction Award for his short story *getting the hell out of reseda*. He was hoping it would be worth more money, though.

Carrie Etter

Carrie Etter is a returning student at UCLA, majoring in English with a creative writing specialization, and has poems forthcoming in *Blue Mesa Review* and *The Literary Review* and a review in *Poet & Critic*. "If you ask me what I came into this world to do, I will tell you: I came to live out loud."--Emile Zola. Favorite pastimes include (but go far beyond) roller blading at the beach, eating Italian and Indian food, attending good poetry readings, sex, reading, writing, having a cafe latte or a pint of Carlsberg in their attendant environs, and taking part in electric conversations.

Contributors

Sesshu Foster

I teach English in Boyle Heights. I sponsor the Holenbeck Poetry Club, teenagers who have their poetry read at Beyond Baroque, UCLA, East L.A. Community College, KPFK FM radio, and other places city wide. Sections of *City Terrace Field Manual* have appeared in Fiction International, Iowa Review, ACM (Another College Magazine), and other magazines.

Chris Jurgenson

Art in general--photography in specific. Inquiries contact 20152 Acre Street, Canoga Park, CA 91306.

Tara Kolarek

When she's not just being, she is becoming, after which she is. Then she's there and when she's not there she has left and is on her way to becoming. After becoming she stays and just is.

Helen Laurence

Helen Laurence is completing her M.A. in writing at CSUN this semester and planning escape, streaming wild lyrics as she flees L.A. for a craggy retreat.

Tom Moran

Tom Moran talks with his hands, dreams in 18% gray, and has never been convicted of a felony. People describe his profession in various ways; his current favorite is "Signal-guy." Thanks to Tamara Rosenberg who helped him flush out some new inspiration.

Perk

Perk: 50 years of age, 4 grown kids, 2 masters degrees, 2 difficult husbands past and present, 15 moves, 1 great dog--and all I ever really wanted to do was paint.

John Sanders

John Sanders was a painting student at CSUN; now he is a quake refugee seeking stillness, happiness, and culture in San Francisco. If John was a game-show contestant, this is how he would be introduced: John Sanders originated in Detroit. He is a mixed-media artist who uses his experience in 27 states and his dreams to create his work.

Alicia Vogl Saenz

Alicia Vogl Saenz nació en Los Angeles por un accidente histórico, debió haber nacido en Latinoamérica. Ahora ha descubierto que hay muchos en Los Angeles como ella y junto con ellos, ella siente que está creando una nueva cultura, multilingüe. Ella cree que al aprender otras idiomas, se abren puertas de comprensión para otras culturas.

Melody Stevenson

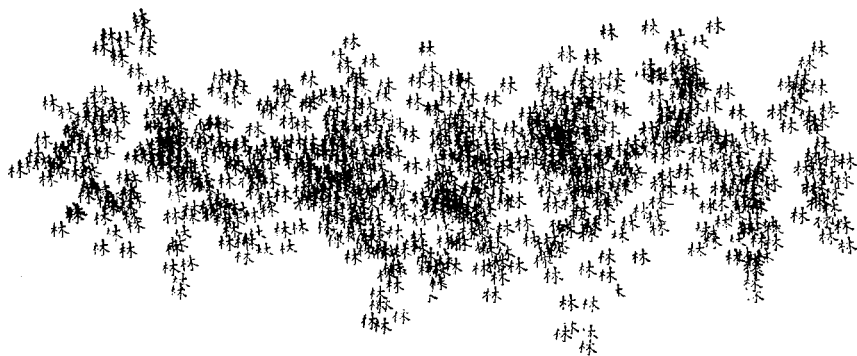
Melody Stevenson is a perennial student and a writing teacher here at CSUN. "Delivery" was written years ago, but

Chester just kept on following directions until someone finally heard his loafers humming down the sidewalk. Stevenson's work has been accepted for publication in PARENT'S magazine, RECTANGLE, and STUDIO ONE. She is proud to have been the first recipient of Sigma Tau Delta's BEN SALTMAN AWARD. Stevenson loves teaching, writing, and CSUN--quaking trailers and all. She is currently completing her first novel, *The Life Stone of Singing Bird*.

Tom Tapp

Tom Tapp's favorites (4/1/94): pornoglossia, visceral, inchoate, dilaudid, ideation, duodenum, marmot, maltsupex, jejune, penumbra, nurgle, tatami, puerile, loquat, ombudsman, quaff, jinn, autodidactic, daguerreotype, chatauqua, fulcrum, intemplation, Lop Nor, guernica.

Amy M. Lam Wai Man



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