



spring 1996



g l r

great lake review

...the great lake review...
spring 1996

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cover design by Carol Wade (with special thanks to Jasper Johns)

I eat people

By Daniel Caskey

my eyes slowly searching
for the place i caused no pain;
when the earth was close to me.
the field was green
the horizon open, but close.
i sucked the life from purple clover.
i hadn't learned to worry
and I only drank nectar.

in the field from forever
there was a sewer grate.
at the end of the Spring
with the sun burning
and the grass cool to the touch
i fell.
at the sight of snow
in the bottom of that hole
I was cold.

Once I took the assumptions to heart
understanding was easy.
I glance quickly and
probe deeply.
I'm trying to find
what I left behind and I look in you.
Nectar is no longer sweet, so now
I eat people.

Patchwork

By Rosemarie Puppato

consider my patchwork, my 90's style handiwork
watch closely the fingers, patiently
watch as they move they seem to draw you in
in in in
away from the bleakness of
the day and grabbing your attention in a
way that won't let you resist
in a way that makes you remember the
eventful
fingering music of the poke
poke poke of the needle pushing
through the tight pressured weave of
the cloth

consider the movement of my arm
stretching out expertly and professionally
into the empty with the shiny needle going faster than my
own live words
that I say when I'm sitting next to you but now,
in my finger grip, in my fingers on the keyboard
crying, trying not to...lose touch - with something...
as if I could do something to bring all
of the loveliness back
and splash it all over the concrete walls at the college union
or even downtown and kind of liven up the place
-you know- with a "hello!" to the people
on the street or with the conversation, a slow, careful
patchwork kind of one...coffee, and acoustic guitar...
when we were remembering to live
the way we pictured living to be
-where we put our mental stimulation to some kind
of good use
like filling up each other's hearts
like sewing on a button. Like
making time for each other or for just a few at least
it's the handiwork of the 90's
it's the way the red neon digital clock numbers keep
turning one by one except during blackouts when

some people get out their battery powered
faces with the prerecorded blue eyes
and a special way of knowing intimately those tv movie stars
...it's the way my fingers glide across the keyboard
doing research doing papers
doing issues and words lots of empty
and i miss you my warm frien...
it's the 90's that's why their sentences aren't always finis...
we neverquite had the opportun...
you know what I mea...
I think
I lost my priorit...
oops i think they're around here som...
here they are...whoa that was close. (close?).

my shell

By Rosemarie Puppato

I'd like to
come out of my shell but not
too far out
try soar
ing, looking about in this
world around me. Try sun
for a change, and warm
loving friendships. Try
learning to trust, and
honestly. I'd like
to come out of my shell but
not too far
out. Try laugh
ing, holding out a hand or
two. Stretching out my bound
aries. Or let someone in to
see me, vulnerability and all, but just
enough to come out of
my shell, but not too
far out. Keep a little
bit of me that
protects the rest of me that
knows that people sometimes
makes mistakes, and shells bump
into each other and break. That's why not too far out. But, I'd
like to come out.

Tiffany's Again?

By Debra L. Ortiz

Home again,
coffee, tea,
Gina, Lu and me
night done again.

The usual again:
a bagel cream cheese,
diet coke and water please.
Same waitress again,

"You again?"
She knows us well:
corner seats, kiss and tell,
3 a.m. again

Early again
Ten of, "Amazing Grace"
11:00 p.m open the place,
Tiffany's again.

What's new again?
Time and plates are stacked;
Gina and I kill two packs,
Marlboro lights again.

Poor Lu again!
She'll probably croak
from our second hand smoke.
Refills again?

God again.
God and sex in one...
conversation, never done
girl talk again.

Sex again
politics and sports never never,
religion and life ever ever
forever again!

Forever again.
Timeless talk on the up and up,
timeless tea, the bottomless cup.
Again. Again.

Home again.
Coffee, tea,
Gina Lu and me
night done again.

(The scene opens on an empty stage, a simple black drop cloth is the only background. CHUCK enters from stage right, walking slowly downstage. CHUCK fires a revolver out over the audience.)

Listening...? This is it; the gun I shot him with.

(HE empties the remaining bullets from the gun and sets both the gun and the bullets down. CHUCK stands over the weapon, gazing down at it for a moment. HE picks up the gun again, twirls it on his finger.)

It's like...A man comes along, takes everything you've ever respected in your father, all the reasons you loved and idolized the man, and blows it all to hell. He leaves you with memories you can't trust and a broken home. What am I supposed to say to a man like that? "No more, Daddy; no more kitchen table," stared him dead in the eye, and said "Pop you gotta stop it." He looked at me like I was the crazy one. He wouldn't stop...even when we caught him, he wouldn't stop. I showed him his own medical file, pointed out where it said that his lung cancer was benign and d'ya know what I got for my trouble? LIES! For seven years nothing but lies: "I'm dying of cancer, I lost my job 'cuz the school board voted me out, the Derkins hate me because I'm sick." On and on.

A friend of my father's used to tell me stories about his tour in Viet Nam. He'd say, "You trust your Uncle Leo, boy, nothin's harder than shooting your fellow man." Whatta crock. I doubt the concept of circumstance ever really dawned on that ol' blow-hard.

(HE sits down on the stage in front of the pile of bullets.)

So you're asking yourself, "How could he kill a man for lying?" I didn't. I killed when I knew he would keep right on doing what he was doing. Every time I heard about another family he broke up, I killed him. Every time I had to sit with my mother while she cried herself to sleep, I killed him. Everytime I walked past the home that used to be mine, I killed him! and then...every time I thought about him, I was killing him in my mind. The .38 didn't change much; he's been dead to me for years.

John Mackonkey

WINTER KILLS
an excerpt
By Michael Angel Mendoza

Charles and I didn't get along very well and he went on to just the very life I was hoping he wouldn't. He made it through elementary school, barely got into high school and never made it out. The streets, their pull was too powerful for Charles. The streets took him and ate him. They ate him and shit him out at "FORTY SECOND STREET, TIMES SQUARE- THE DEUCE."

There were weeks on end I wouldn't see that boy. I'd be callin' police stations all over town. Seein' if he turned up arrested or dead but nothin' ever came of that. Cops had better things to do than walk the streets lookin' for some project kid. Charles would leave me signs, he would. He'd come to the house when he knew I would'nt be there. He'd eat somethin' valuable to hock. I thought about changin' the locks, but then how would I ever know if he was still alive? It was an unspoken understandin' we had. I'd fill the fridge and leave out some money or a watch or somethin'. He would take it and lock the door on the way out.

Charles' visits started comin' less and less frequent after a while. At this time worry was useless. I had to go out and find him. It came down to me. I'd be walkin' The Deuce lookin' for him myself. Goddammit! The kid was only sixteen years old. Where the hell could he be?

Every night I'd walk the streets lookin' for him. I felt like the ol' fool asking around if they'd seen my kid, like hundreds of other folks had done and hundreds more would.

"Does anyone know Charles Winter? Have you seen this boy?" I'd show 'em a photograph of Charles when he was fourteen years ol'. God it seemed like a life away. All I'd get is a bunch of punk kids laughin' at me and telling me to go home before I got myself killed. Fuckin' street trash!

One night I walked up to this little guy dressed like a woman sellin' his ass on the corner of Thirty Ninth and Ninth ave.

"Ex-excuse me *miss*?" He laughed. I was getting really tired of being laughed at by those punk kids. Never mind some little faggot in a dress. He talked to me in a fake woman's voice;

"What do you need ol' man? Wanna try something new? Once you tried the best you won't the rest. I'm the best of both worlds baby."

"Look here man, I wanna know if you've seen this boy!" I thrust the picture at him. The little queer snatched it and looked at it for a while, then he looked at me.

"This your boy?" His voice had changed, he was a man now. With a slight bit of anger in his voice.

"Yeah, have you seen him?"

"Yeah I've seen him. Your boy is bad news, best forget about him and get your ass home." I was gettin'reeeeeeal tired of people sendin' me home. I held it in.

"His name is Charles Winter. Would..."

"His name ain't *Charles Winter* anymore. Around here his name is Snow. He's Apache's right hand man, and around here Apache's *the* man."

That did it.

"Who the fuck is Apache! Some goddamn fuckin' Indian?!" Didn't faze the little queer at all, as a matter of fact he smiled at me.

"You could say that...but I wouldn't say it too loud. You see, Apache and your little boy *Charles*, a.k.a. *Snow*, a.k.a. **badass**!!, own the streets around here. Anything goes down around the Deuce, those two are either responsible for it or they know who is. You could say it's like their back yard, brother."

"Look, do you know how I can find my boy? I've been lookin' for him for weeks..." That faggot just kept on smilin' and looked me dead in the eyes and said,

"Consider your boy already gone. Charles Winter don't no longer exist. Go on home papa. Your boy's been dead for a long time, he just don't know it yet." He turned and walked away. I looked the other way. I couldn't watch that faggot walk away in his tight dress, high heels and wig.

"Fuck you!" I said to the ground between my tired old feet, the faggot and myself.

"It'll cost you ol' man!"

That little fag didn't know how much it already had.

"Your boy was Snow? Holy shit! That's like bein' Scarface's daddy or some shit. Yo-ho-ho, people still talkin' about Snow. That was one nasty mothafucker!"

"Did somebody say you could speak, Jackson? Lemme tell you somethin' boy. I am nowhere even close as nice as I useta be and patience I'm just about out of."

"Yo, Sorry Jeb. So whahappened?"

The first year after Charles disappeared was the really mean one. I hit the bottle hard and the bottle hit back just as hard. I'd stopped lookin' for the boy and if anyone was lookin' for me they would find me followin' in my son's footsteps. That's when things really started to get bad. I was gettin' thrown out of every bar on the Deuce. I had the mind to get to my boy anyway I could. I though if I were to talk shit in enough bars about Mr. Snow, eventually he would come to me. Yeah, but in all the time, nothin'. Fuckin' nothin', that boy I raised was made of ice.

One day I went and performed my usual show at McAnn's between Broadway and Eighth avenue on forty-fourth street and half way through it this little waitress next to me...

"What the fuck do you think ya doin'? Heh?.. I saw you do this same shit at da Blarney Stone two weeks ago. Word for fuckin' word. Do you hire out for private parties or somethin'? You shoulda seen her. She couldn't have weighed more than a hundred pounds but she had this attitude that made her six feet tall. Obviously Italian, Brooklyn bred, probably Bensonhurst. She wore too much eye make-up and she had a slightly crooked smile but she was pretty and in McAnn's she was Miss America. She shocked the shit outta me.

"Look little girl, I got my reasons for being this way..."

"Yeah and I got *my* reasons for telling you to stop droolin' on my fuckin' bar. Look grandpa, alls I'm askin' you to do is cut your performance short tonight. Startin' tomorrow I'll be bartending at this beautiful lounge and the last fuckin' thing I need is for every wack job like you, no offense, to think this is some open forum or somethin'.

Before you know it, I'm gonna have Shakespeare in the bathroom, born-again fuckin' Christians in the booths against the wall. I hate those born-again assholes, holdin' their little signs that list what I did on the weekend as my first class ticket to hell. Pointin' their fingers at me yellin', 'Sinner!' at me as I walk by. Hey fuck dem! Hey fuck you! They don't know what the fuck I'm doin' at night, only my ol' man does, and once in awhile he don't even know. But you know who really pisses me off? Do ya?"

"No." She was for real.

"It's dem fuckin' Jehovah's Witnesses... You're not one of dem, are you? I hope not, that would be really fucked

up, you know. How would I even know?"

"No, I'm no Jehovah."

"Good, cause dem fuckers drive me fuckin crazy.

Allright, who the fuck is awake at seven o'clock in the mornin' on Saturday morning. I'll tell ya who. Priests, guys that deliver the paper, poodles and Jehovah's witnesses. Now you see these people make up maybe point zero zero zero zero one of the population of the city, right?"

So I nodded to her. She puts up her tiny hands, fingers extended with shiny black nailpolish on each. She grabbed her pinky finger on her left hand with her thumb and fore finger of her right hand and she started to talk again.

"Right. O.k., but we need them, listen. We need the priests, they're o.k. They don't bother you unless you go to church and if you go to church to be told how much of a sinner you are week after week... Well, that's your own fuckin' problem." Down went the pinky. She grabbed the next finger.

"We need the cops...sometimes, so they're o.k." Down went that finger, next she grabbed the middle finger.

The paper delivery guys are essential. I mean you got the horoscopes, the comics, the sports page and could you imagine all those people with guns that don't know how to use 'em? So the paper guys are in." Next finger.

"The bread guys; donuts. Need I say more? Feeds us, the cops, it's a beautiful thing." All that was left was her thumb.

"Now you got this ol' woman and her nasty little dog. This is another purpose for this guy." She gives me the finger.

"You see this guy in his paper truck runs over the nasty little mutt. The ol' lady tweaks and looks for a cop," Next finger's up.

"But the cop is too busy pullin' over the bread guy for speedin', and scorin' some donuts on the side you see," Pointer finger goes up.

"So she runs to a priest who tells her that everythin's all right, that the lord meant for it to happen. It was the dog's time or somethin'." All the fingers again.

"Sayin' fuck you lady your dog just ain't fuckin' newsworthy, you know what I mean?" She and the two other people in the bar started to laugh and I found nyself joinin' them.

"But those Jehovah's witnesses they have to go." I had forgotten about them.

"What's your name daddy?"

"Jeb..Jeb Winter."

"I'm Tracey Antoniello, it's nice to meet cha." We shook hands.

"Tell me Ol' Man Winter, why do you have such a hard-on for Snow? That's one kid you really don't want to fuck with."

"You know my boy?!" I got up from my seat so quickly it fell over.

"Oh, I see. He's your son. Yeah I can see it. Both of you do the same stupid things."

"Tracey, please, tell me how I can get in touch with him. I haven't seen him for almost two years."

"Eeeasy there killer. Now you know I can't do that. I like my pretty little face the way it is, thank you. Where Snow and Apache reside, ain't nobody's information."

"Is there anyway to get a message to him? Something? C'mon Tracey, don't shut the fuckin' door in my face, please!"

"First off, take it easy. Loo, all I can do is talk to my ol' man and see if he can take care of it. Angel useta work with him a while back. I'll ask him, but don't even fuckin' think comin' here an hauntin' me! Capiche? You give me any shit and I'll let Angel take care of you."

"Thank you, Tracey, thank you very much."

"Come here next Friday about eleven-thirty and I'll see if I can't come up with somethin' for you. But no promises! You hear me?" I nodded to her and left the bar. I got on the number two and went to the first car and looked out the front window all the way home.

"So whahappened? Shit, Jeb dont' stop right there! Damn it was gettin' good. Whassup wit dat?" Jackson strutted around the fire as if anticipatin' a fight.

"I gotta go take a leak. Is that alright wit' you Jackson?"

"Yeah, but hurry back man." Ol' Man Winter wandered back into the shadows as quietly as he had originally come.

"Are you gonna shut the fuck up?" D.P. glared at Jackson.

"Yo, the ol' man stopped, I didn't say shit."

"Yeah well just shut the fuck up Jack."

Like A Circle, Open and Closed

By Carol Wade

You have man dreams
You dream of sport and audiences
People watching, laughing, gaping
As you roll around the floor
In small beige pajamas
Of disasters and soaring towers
And secrets no one will learn

I dream of yellow, of fog and nobodies
Of myself inside aimless, legless smoke bomb eruptions
My thumb pointing in the road,
Standing in TexMex, surrounded by dirt and
Dancing children
Poor and afraid of the cash machine banditos
Watching buses come and go

You have boy dreams
Devoid of meaning or want for suggestions
No explanations
Rifles, gunshots and ear-to-ear grins
A face like your mother's
Reaching out towards her
No form, you go through her like fog

I dream in kaleidoscope color
Grand blurry failures, despite my prescription
The daytime finds my swollen eyes
Straining to see around blocky buildings
To see myself on a bus en route to the place
Where your dreams roll on
Despite the sun

My biggest sleep comes under that breaking strain
Daylight pouring down, a honeyed paste
Life is blind to me
Till all of you come shuffling slowly in
Dark chaperones I cling to, seeking amnesia, always failing
You, bobbing like a buoy
I, drowning like a nightmare

Your arms extend out just so far, with fingertips
That brush my eyes half-closed, keeping the white blindness
Away
There, in the day, I wish for wings
I wait for the return of dreams' lost magic
A CD that doesn't skip as I sleep
Rotting my head on the pillow
For warmth that doesn't give me nosebleeds
You fingers brush my eyes half-closed, and always move away
Burning a little, taking some skin and lashes with them

It is this way I stroll, through the day and dark,
Eyes open always to you, and you, and you
But me...all failings and triumphs remaining the same
With dreams of grey
Of rain, of mazes and of nakedness
I go on breathing
Through the blight
Often forgetting, but soon remembering
The joke of the day
And my nomad's journey through each night

Comprehension And Register

(a dream-poem meant for reading)

By Carol Wade

Clark Gable antimony wax ribbon
Smelting gored hides on rippling
Azimuthal green chloroplastic
Surfaces

Sine waves ripple
Soft and fragrent dreams
Curling teeth reaching
False smiling

Apple current jelly
Aim return Monroe County
Eleven seven eleven dates
Hanging in the balance do everything
You can
Stop motion evolution
Margaret Bourke-White out
Factory assembly ready made

Carbon freeze and bicycle wheel
Slick hungry azoth rolling
From crest to trough---->pen
On quadrille paper
A nighttime journey
Dead men tell no tales
Nor do ones with one red shoe
Or wan red skin frizzy head a guy named ED

Mandatory bomb drill bit by bit boring
Holes in temporal lobes the day after the longest yard
Ankle trussed on cruches
Screen on channel seven eleven seven when
CHALLENGER EXPLODING
Price i\$ Right and home from school
Minimalist Mies antifrieze
Groaning infrastructure enclosed in enveopes

Crashed out
Like a smashed up-street
Sign - Symbol - Signifier on a billboard
Tan thirty four foot Tanya Tucker
Plastic surgeon dancing blind with a scalpel
Drunk from the success of another grab 'n stab
Collated office job with a permanent
Grin

Pepsomentadentifrice
White as snow and black as holes
Singularities of quantum elastic space-time magazine
Pages poised on the inside edge
Event horizon
<---Line stretching left right left right up down in out in out--->
Fall in and disappear to be
Show up somewhere else and do a little dance
(don't forget to blink)

Open Road

Chapter 2

By Julie Arliss

The brilliant red 1964 Ford Fairlaine carefully rolled down Napoleon Street, looking for an available parking space. Its driver, Flossie Roberston, was more or less along for the ride. It was a bulky, cumbersome car, wide enough to plow down anything in its path and with the interior room to fit six comfortably. She never quite got the hang of operating this car. The three speed standard shift on the steering wheel and the clutch pedal foiled any attempt on Flossie's part to get a smooth transition into the next gear. The fact that she had a line of cars behind her didn't make the maneuvering much easier. As she downshifted to take a parking space, the grinding of gears could be heard throughout most of the two block area of downtown. Flossie didn't drive the car much, just on special occasions or when there was absolutely no threat of rain. The car had sentimental value to her. Her late husband Isaac had surprised her with it as a Valentine's Day present in 1981. The car was red inside and out. Red interior, dash, steering wheel and carpet caused sensory overload everytime Flossie drove it. And chrome, "real chrome, not that cheap, flimsy silver painted plastic they put on the cars today," as Isaac used to say. Besides the shiny red paint job, the wheel hubs also sported flashes of red. Not one speck of rust, not one ding, dent or scratch blemished the surface of the nearly three decade old car. It was immortal, an eternally youthful piece of machinery that withstood the test of time. Flossie often wondered if Isaac took as good care of himself as he did that car, maybe he'd still be running.

Isaac drove it only in the summer, until his illness made it nearly impossible for him to drive. Flossie gradually took over the driver's seat for her husband, driving him to the coffee klatch, to the auto parts store to purchase another hose or belt for the car. She even took him into the city for his doctor's appointments. However, they took the Mercury for out of town trips.

Flossie sat in the car for a few moments gathering her grocery list, wallet, and wits. She had almost had an accident at the intersection

of Napoleon and Columbia. She was sure she had looked both ways twice, but the semi came bracing down on her back bumper as she turned to enter downtown. She jerked the wheel and jumped the curb just in time to let the truck barrel by her. With her usually steely nerves frazzled and frayed, she went only ten miles an hour down the street. The line of cars behind her attested to the hunger and hurriedness of the local factory workers, desperate for the appeasement, errands and banking of the noontime lunch hour, which unfortunately for them was only twenty minutes long. The honking of horns and shouting of obscenities only made her more jittery and she slowed down, until it looked like a funeral procession with the only missing vehicle being the hearse.

She wouldn't tell Helen about her near accident. Helen would only look down at her lunch plate and mumble something about giving the car up. Lately her son-in-law, Steven, had been trying to finagle his way into the driver's seat under the guise of concern for Flossie's welfare. It wasn't safe for her to drive anymore was his argument. But Flossie knew better. She saw the way Steven drooled all over himself when he was around that car. And Helen, right there by his side, half heartedly went along with him. Helen was the reason Flossie was out in the first place. It was almost time for her weekly visit and Flossie was out of the chocolate cream cheese filled muffins that she loved so much. She was simply going to run to the grocery store to buy them and here she was almost getting killed. Flossie calmed herself by applying some lipstick; the same shade she had worn for years. Looking into the rearview mirror, she saw with dreaded apprehension her husband's old cronies approaching.

"Hiya, Flossie," cried Ezra Gunkler, the town know-it-all. He made it his business to know everyone else's business and usually called everyone by their first names, like he was some long lost relative. Flossie thought he had a crush on her. She figured he would be good enough to maybe date or have lunch with at the corner cafe, but marriage was out of the question. She wasn't ready for another commitment. "Not even a widow two years and they're already knocking at my door," she complained to Helen during one of her visits. She noted that Helen reacted to that statement by grabbing another frosted brownie.

"Hello, Ezra," she said, coyly waving to him. He came around to the driver's side of the car.

"This sure is a beautiful car you got here," remarked Ezra. He opened the door for her and helped her out. She found herself wishing she had worn her good shoes instead of the torn and weathered loafers she had on.

"Well, you know how Isaac took such good care of it," Flossie replied. She felt tears welling up in her eyes. She quickly looked down

and tried to think of something, to change the subject. But Ezra charged on.

"He sure did," he said. "Out there every weekeend, polishing and buffing that car. I think he changed the oil so much it caused that oil shortage back there in the seventies. I'm sure he would be proud of the way you're keeping the car going, still driving it and everything." He touched lightly the window trim. "Say, is that real chrome?"

Flossie didn't want to talk about the car anymore.

"I'm going to visit my sister later on today," she blurted out, cutting off any remark Ezra was about to make. "Minnie, the oldest just flew in from Cincinnati yesterday."

"Boy," laughed Ezra, "I bet her arms are tired. A smile broke out on Flossie's face.

homecoming

By Deborah Crabtree

if I danced among the prism bars of the rainbow
skirting through my world received
my backyard might have been vibrant kelly, the blades and onion
grass slicing my face, bleeding and seeping my blood-red tired fears
into
the packed clay that hides tiny, age-old pots and forks
came with the kitchen set
rusted on the back porch

the road might set her free
if she can jump that distance from green to indigo without
trapping herself in the
blues
winding across the tolled interstates stretched from New Hampshire
and
back to the land of fried okra and squash, tomatoes, potatoes,
and Paw-Paw's UPS-ed silverqueen corn, but
everyone knows that running sets no bug, squirrel
or girl lost in her girlness, childness, sadness
free
and to climb upon the rainbow comes from
letting the rain within pour from head to heart,
showering, knowing, it is not
your fault, your reason

now I situate myself
that fuzzy place
just between the blue and green
and wonder where this rainbow might have led without
the direction, the heat of the sun.
coming back, peering inside,
I can see bits of dust and cobweb floating in the light
trapped by the house windows, shattered now to make a life
anew for another.

the
finger
fast
she s frantic
in my
lick
stop the
luscious
breast
scream
woman ly
love
together
smear ed
with
sweat
from
the storm
she is a
goddess

...from the refrigerator door...
(magnetic poetry)
Cara M. Marshall

The Shamrock

By Gloria McAndrews
4th grade, St. Mary's School, Oswego

It sways to and fro
in the breeze like a small weeping
willow. The green of an emerald
dances on the leaf. It loves dancing
in the cold air and butterflies sucking
the sweet flowers. Suddenly a
strong breeze comes and blows
the tiny emerald to a house
of green and brings luck to me.

Gemini

By Edward D. Holden

No memory. None at all.

Did I do it? So foggy. But did I?

James swallowed hard in consideration, as the slick prosecuting lawyer paced from the left side of the dim, wooden courtroom, and then back to the right side. And back. And again. Always talking. Always looking at the jury. Looking and talking, slick and smooth. Uncaring.

James shifted his body in the uncompromising wooden seat next to the ancient judge. He felt discomfort; he breathed the stuffy air. He had to leave, to get out, go home, have a beer. He had to be acquitted, above all.

I must remember something. Anything. Did I do it?

He glanced at his own cheap little lawyer. Just a brief glance, only a second, but it only took a second for him to receive the man's response - a shrug. A helpless shrug. *You will die*, the shrug seemed to say. Die.

The slick prosecution turned his shiny head toward James in the witness box. James, on the uncomfortable and flat wooden seat. James, with the jury staring at him, with all of them thinking he was guilty. They did, all of them.

"Mr. Larson?"

James' eyes shot up at the slick lawyer. He forgot about the jury, about the death that had occurred, but not about his own.

"Mr. Larson, I asked you a question."

"Answer the prosecution's question, Mr. Larson."

the aged judge glared at him like a wrinkled, black-cloaked fungus.

"What?"

Mr. Slick Prosecution epitomized a very rigid impatience.

"We have a photograph of you, clearly taken in Albany, in the Plaza, at night, with Mr. Davis. Do you remember what happened to him when he was drunk. Vodka, beer, wine. Albany. He strained his mind; he could never remember what happened to him when he was drunk. He had enough trouble remembering what happened to him when he was drunk. He had enough trouble remembering things sober. He nervously straightened his shirt, then his unwashed - yet - fashionable black dress pants. Folded the pleats. Felt his house keys jingle heavily in his pocket, the weight of his wallet under him.

"Do you remember this photograph, Mr. Larson?" Do you deny being in Empire State Plaza on the night the murder must have been committed?"

Click. The flash went off in his face, blinding him, making him feel even more nauseous, sick. Where was he? Where was Davis?

James had been wandering aimlessly, barely conscious of others around him, walking, talking, not caring about the predicament at work that so completely occupied his mind. The flash had startled him, but he was drunk enough not to react until a few seconds after, with a shake of his head to clear his alarm. Where was Davis? He prepared himself for a glance to the right, took a breath to fill his lungs (better to lose one minute to deep preparation than to lose five to sickness), and turned to look behind him. He swayed backwards, almost toppling onto the cement beneath his feet, which seemed to be moving in a circle as it tilted sickeningly. An arm, a hand, grabbed his shoulder.

It was Davis, catching him, asking if he was alright. Davis, smiling oddly in the light of the street lamps, his face seeming to glow in the backdrop of night, as if he were just as drunk as James, as if drunkenness was contagious, a virus infecting their entire group.

"I'm okay," James managed to convey. "...m drunk."

Everyone was walking away from him, and Davis tugged his arm. Pierre Roberts laughed, seeming to ignore past troubles. He was in the same boat as James, cast away from his job after years of work -except he wasn't reacting by getting wasted. Pierre was just having a good time. He and Davis were getting along like old school chums. Screw them.

"Let's go back to the hotel," Pierre suggested. James was unsure why; it wasn't as if they'd have to get up early, to go to the lab. Ever again, in fact.

"You don't have to get this drunk." A woman's voice. Sandra. "It's just a job. You don't see Pierre getting drunk, and he's in the same boat as you."

James looked up at Sandra and trudged along behind them, the world continuing to twist itself into even more stomach-wrenching positions.

"Drink a glass of water would you?"

The slick prosecution lawyer ran his hand through his jet-black hair as if it needed straightening some more, and he picked up a white piece of paper from his table as he walked by it. He held it up for James to see.

"Do you vaguely recognize this document, Mr. Larson?"

Larson squinted at it, at the list of names and dates and room numbers printed on it. He stalled for a moment, thinking of the best way to respond. He cleared his throat tensely.

"Vaguely."

"So you did sign your name on this form, personally?"

James fidgeted, inhaled, exhaled.

"Um...yes. Personally."

The slick lawyer let this answer hang in the front of the jury's minds for a few seconds while he stared James in the eye, piercing his will into the nervous defendant, smugly and with increased ego. He wasn't after the truth. He saw one possibility, and only one - the guilt of Mr. James Larson.

Bastard. Leave me alone. I didn't do it. I ... could I have?

The prosecution returned to the table, saying "Let the record show that this document is a faxed copy of a guest list from the Capitol Hotel in Albany, New York, showing Mr. Larson to have checked into a suite with Mr. Davis and several coworkers on the night in question." The man spun around and stared into James' eyes a second time. "Now, Mr. Larson, is your memory so badly blackened-out that you don't remember...the tea?"

"Tea will be good for you. It'll wake you up." Sandra selected a box of free tea leaves from a shelf in the Lark St. Tea and Coffee Shoppe. Tan box, with a picture of a trading ship on it. Earl Grey Finest Blend, the label proclaimed traditionally. I'll make it when we get back to the hotel."

"I don't want to be woken up."

The smile. "Of course you do." Her stare pierced him, caring but intrusive. "Are you moody just because of the lay-offs?"

"I'm not moody. I'm drunk."

"You're a decent biologist, you know. You can find other work."

"I hate tea." He breathed deeply to clear the nausea, but it didn't work.

She smiled again and moved toward the store's cash register. "Maybe you will be the biologist who breeds a perfect tea leaf."

"I'm a viral biologist," he said, and suddenly thought, for a brief moment - probably because he was drunk - that there might be an advantageous way to mix viral biology with tea making. Perhaps there was one.

"You don't see Pierre getting upset about his job, and he's in the same boat as you. He seems alright about it. He's already applied to Castle Agriculture. Maybe you could work for them; they're hiring." She smiled again. It was becoming more and more irritating.

"I'm a virologist."

The prosecution lawyer glared at James meaningfully, and James shook.

"You are familiar with the virus in question, Mr. Larson?"

One of twelve being studied in your lab simultaneously. B4-812? I think you called it...Gemini?"

Gemini...two. One of twelve.

"Yes," came James' meek reply.

The man smiled. Smirked, would be a better word. "I'll sum it up for the jury, then, Mr. Larson. Feel free to correct me if I'm incorrect, or if I go too far." He barely turned, barely changed his stance, yet at the same time his mood, his voice shifted to the court, and the jury, and the judge. "The Gemini virus is one of the twelve non-contagious viruses being studied in the BioServ laboratories. they are infectious by ingestion, through the digestive tract, but are otherwise harmless. Gemini, which was the one identified in the body of Mr. Davis, has a very specific time-period of infection..."

"Incubation period," James put in quietly.

"...incubation period, thank you, which in retrospect will identify the time, to within three hours, at which it first entered the human body. Exactly one week and three days before the fatality. Am I correct so far, Mr. Larson?"

"Uh...yes."

"And Dr. Davis' time of death," the slick man went on, "places the delivery of the virus into the digestive system at some point during your trip to Albany. Around the time you all drank tea, according to Pierre Robert's testimony. Did you happen to notice that, Mr. Larson?"

"Uh..." James was still nervous, uncomfortable, but he was starting to lose his grip, his patience. His temper was slipping. "I did, yes. But I didn't think that..."

"It wouldn't have been difficult for you to get a sample of this virus, would it have? You could have transported it from the lab, perhaps in a test tube of some sort. Inconspicuous..."

The image projected itself in James' mind. The Gemini virus, B4-812. A test tube, small and rendered of thin, smooth glass. A cup of Earl Grey for Davis. Death. It was so clear. They thought he was guilty now, if they hadn't before. James shifted nervously again, and looked at his cheap lawyer, who glanced back at him and shrugged. A death shrug. *I can't help*, it said. Useless.

"Perhaps you thought no one would know what had killed Dr. Davis," the prosecution lawyer went on. "And you might be called back to work, in his place. But your colleague, Pierre Roberts helped us on the viral study. He identified B4-812."

Gemini. Two. the name sifted through what remained of James' reasoning mind. There were *two* possibilities; but the lawyer could barely see it. Or could he? Lawyers were hired to defend, or to prosecute, but not to find the truth. This one was probably blind to

anything that was not useful to his case, and Pierre was useful only as a researcher. Not as a suspect. To this lawyer, James was the only suspect, as long as the trial lasted.

James stiffened his brow and glared at the lawyer for the first time, unfaltering. "So you think I added this virus... to tea?"

Was it clear that he could have done it? Perhaps it was, to the lawyer. They had all gone back to the hotel, found their multi-roomed suite. James fell weakly onto the sofa in the main room, and Sandra plugged in a large pot. He watched her as she plugged it in and waited for it to boil.

"Who wants tea?" she asked them with a cheerful smile.

No one answered. They were all staring at James. He couldn't exactly tell why. It may have been because he was drunk, or because he had knocked over that display of ceramic mugs in that tea and coffee shop. He looked himself over. It couldn't be because of what he was wearing, he reasoned. He looked at his clothes. His dress shirt was wrinkled but not dirty. It was white with vertical red stripes, and there was only one stain on it. Barely visible. His tie was loosened but made of blue silk, which was shiny and wavy on his chest. His pants were the best he owned, the black pleated kind that one might wear to a wedding or a nice dinner. They were dress pants so neat and stiff that he often left things in the pockets because he rarely had to wash them. His shoes were a brown that matched his socks perfectly. They had mud on them- he wasn't sure how that had come about- but it wasn't too prominent. Still, they stared at him in pity, anger. He heard Davis sigh.

"I'll have tea, Sandra," James said, his speech still slurred in his drunkenness. "We'll all have some tea."

And they did. All of them.

And now this slick lawyer assumed that he had taken some of the B4-812 - *Gemini*- and added it to Davis' cup while no one was looking, and Davis had taken a sip or two, then downed the rest of the cup. And then, after one week and three days...

Death. First Davis, and now James, if convicted.

James was thoroughly angered with this legal demon. He was finally thinking things through, thinking about the whole affair as this lawyer clearly saw it. And thinking deeper. Gemini. Two possibilities.

"Yes Mr. Larson," the lawyer was saying. "I do believe that is what happened. You transported a viral sample to Albany and used it to murder Dr. Davis."

James looked over the cheap lawyer he had hired. The short,

balding man seemed more interested in what was going on on the piece of paper he was now holding than on what was happening in court. He looked more helpless than James at this point. James looked back at the slick lawyer defiantly.

"But have you asked Pierre?" James proposed.

"Excuse me."

"Pierre. Have you asked Pierre, who helped you identify this so-called...virus?" He let the last word leave his mouth with disgust, as if it were an actual virus.

The lawyer seemed confused.

"Have you asked him about his concerns?" James pressed further. "His motive? About what will happen to him if I go to jail, or die? He's next in line, you know. Someone has to take Davis' position, and Pierre liked him even less than I did. Ask Pierre, Mr. Lawyer. Ask him how he benefits."

The whole room ceased to move, ceased to speculate, ceased to speak. Here was another path, another branch of reasoning. James kept his composure, somehow. He still felt uneasy, uncomfortable, afraid. But he maintained his stance defiantly.

The slick lawyer had clearly not considered it. He had been concerned with the evidence against James, not for him. And now speechless, with no counter-argument that wouldn't sound foolish. James relaxed. He even grinned.

Time passed. The jury convened, and the room grew increasingly musty, intolerable, stuffy. The lights seemed to dim. More time, then the jury returned.

"For the charge of murder in the first degree..." read a middle-aged woman wearing a brown outfit that blended into the dim wood of the room, "we find the defendant, Mr. James Larson...not guilty."

Slam went the gavel.

Slam, again.

Aquitted.

James stood, released, swaying dizzily as if drunk again. In a sense he was drunk. The stuffiness gone, he was drunk on the air that filtered through the courtroom, so much cleaner, fresher than before. He breathed it in, let it infect him. He watched the feeling spread contagiously throughout the room, everyone wanting to get out, to leave. He stepped down towards the exit, and his cheap lawyer grabbed his hand. Shake, skake, skake.

"We did it," the little man said. "We did it. That was brilliant, just...brilliant."

James just shrugged and turned away, ignoring him even as the praises continued. He saw a crack in the gloom, a light from the

outside streaming from the exit opposite him. He moved to it, was drawn to it. The Outside. Aquittal. He drifted out the door as people either patted him on the back or regarded him angrily. *Congratulations you bastard*, they said collectively.

The outside was grey and wet, but beautiful. Bright, after the courtroom. He breathed the air again, let it fill him. Then he walked away from the people who poured out of the courtroom, away from the chatter and the commotion and the occasional reporter. He walked briskly, then paused to look back and view the people, way behind him, speaking about the case, about the testimony.

No one had seen him go; he was free of them. He relaxed and strode ahead more easily and calmly. What would he do? Go home? Have a beer? Or just take a stroll and reflect? He thrust his hands leisurely into the pockets of his black, pleated dress pants as he walked along a narrow side-street, and felt something in his pocket beneath his heavy key ring. Small, cylindrical, and made of smooth glass. He rarely emptied the pockets of his pants, yet it was silly for him to have neglected them in this instance. Especially in court. He should never have had that with him in court. As he passed an empty metal garbage can, he tossed it absently. It shattered as it rattled to the bottom. Then he went off to find a decent bar, or to visit someone. Or to go home free.

Incense

By Brian Gill

A bursting ember's smoke
rises slow, to fade to the blurred depths of
the backdrop,
that come startlingly
into focus
as the grey
wisps fade.
A long columnar
curl of ash,
is
only
slightly
soft
and
sor-
did.
Yes,
that
curl
falls
too;
So
much
dust
blown
bone that lies
cracked on the
wooden holder.
The wooden holder
desperately pri-
mal
with
its carvings and colorful paint, has an almost
mysterious sticker on the bottom, which
reads "Made in India."

Eleblue

By Brian Gill

Black night.
Black night.
Feel right. Moonlight dances in the black
night.
Moon like a hole punch. Sepia tones seep down in the
black night.
Sepia tones seep in a verisimilitudinous black night.

Memories never do feel right when in sepia tones.
Morning under all the clouds dresses in sepia tones.
Memories are all the long fingers chronology owns.

Drive slow.
Drive slow.
Slow go. In the night always drive slow.
Sebatier firmament swims through the moon, flurries
swirl slow,
brilliant full moon road, like the back of a silver fish, to
go.

An Ode to Spring

By Lisa Aliperti

As I float through the starlit darkness, I
allow myself to pause and admire the moon
that glows so brightly upon the velvet sky.
I know that the world will be more brilliant soon.

The white snow of our wintry battle glows
under the rays of silver, sultry light
and creates fine images in my lonely mind.
I can sit down now, curling the grass in my toes
and still be warm and dry in the dark night,
and imagine us together, intertwined.

The air is still and warm, fragrant as black
asphalt that bakes in the heat of summer air.
I let the warmth soak into my naked back,
as subtle winds lift up strands of my hair.
Surrounded by the sounds of spring, I close
my eyes and inhale the scent of the sky deep
within my lungs. But something is tearing my soul
apart. I allow the dream to come it grows
in my mind even though I am not yet asleep.
The vision makes me crazy; it makes me whole.

I'm crouching aside the shore of the bright lake
remembering all those promises I'd made,
and thinking it might have been a big mistake
to let you go like I did and simply fade
away. I realize now that I can't erase
you from my world. I can't just forget the times
we've had, can't let you go like that, into
a life without me, without us. Your face
is etched in my mind; your voice will forever chime
in my heart that beats inside the place we've been to...

Treasured

By Laurie Ann Mastromarino

Mirrored in your eyes I am childlike.
In a reflection I see a woman much sweeter and timid
than the one standing before you.
Believe me, friend, your angelic images take the black-
ened
shards of my soul adrift on your wing.
Free and swift, leaving me motionless in your eyes.
Every moment passing with your touch is
the nature of healing.
Feeling your breath emerges me into new light, a light
much softer than my own.
Rays that steer their way through the shadiest avenues
of my soul.
Free and swift, leaving me motionless in your eyes.
Hold me close, embrace me as a mother did long ago.
With your aid I may begin to embark on serenity,
flushing the restricting weight that kills me
unconsciously.
My friend, your silent words and kindness are more
welcomed than you will ever know.
Free and swift, leaving me motionless in your eyes.

Untitled

By Julie Strongson

I am woman and I roar
(sometimes)
I am only what I can be
try to be
want to be
I am shoe polish
but not
I am a door mat
in the rain
I am woman and I ROAR
I am an activist
a feminist
a SEXIST
sometimes.
I am everything
the world
the universe
I am you
but not me
and vice
versa.
I'm a vegetable
(I'm Michael Jackson)
I'm a mineral and an animal:
and I roar.
I am Woman but Man as well
I don't like rats or radishes
or biology lab dissection
I am afraid
and scared
I hover in the corners of each
and every
room.
I am strong
and brave
I spit in your face
if you look at me long enough.
I am a window pain (or is it pane?)
and a mirror
you see through me
I reflect nothing
I hate hypocrisy
I am WOMAN and I roar

sometimes.
I go to bed
with a hole in my head
and don't wake up till morning
I am a bus stop
but I have no schedule
I am toothpaste on the corner of your mouth
I sit and cross my legs
with the intention of
nothing getting in
not
nothing getting out
or because it's POLITE.
There's enough in there
already
I am french
latin
german
greek
I'm fat and American
I like Pizza (capitalized it tastes better)
I am strange
and weird
and fucked up beyond belief
I'm a cookie
a biscuit
a whatever you call it in your country
I am all you could want and more
and less
and a bag of
fat greasy potato chips
that go to my
CELLULITE.
I am all that
but only a small
tiny
minuscule
microscopic
part
You can't see me
but you can HEAR.
I roar
very
very
very
loud.
I AM woman.

Brainless School Girl

By Julie Strongson

She sits
in the first seat
front row by the door

She raises
her hand
sometimes
when the teacher asks
about something she knows

She babbles
about feminist rights or democracy
or maybe freedom
But I never listen
no one does

She goes out
on a limb all the time
doesn't she know
she looks so stupid
saying such stupid things

She should sit in the back
last row by the window
and maybe answer once or twice
if the teacher calls on her

like the smart girls in the class.

Gossip: Disarmament for a Future in Peace

By Michael Angel Mendoza

*Listen to me brothers and sisters,
when I tell you my words I tell you no lies
'cause gossip is bad and hurts everybody,
and rumors and gossips I truly despise*

.....
but it feeeels really good being bad sometimes...

It was Thursday night at a small establishment called the Patch. I don't usually frequent this bar, but I had my friend Eoin in town and I thought a gradual Bridge Street Run was in order. A bar, a night to ease the tension of his eating all my food and making my life a living hell.

Eoin, being a stranger in this town, and the fact that I never go to this bar, made it a fun place to manipulate total strangers. I liked being a god. We had gone out that evening with my roommate, Bernae. She introduced us to her regular friends in the bar, and it being *her* bar, it was quite a roll call. Throughout the night, Eoin and I had a good time mingling with Bernae's friends and making some new ones of our own. By the end of the night, we felt quite at home and more than a little inebriated.

Around one thirty in the morning, one of Bernae's friends, Leah, looked upset in a corner by the pool table. So, I walked over to her and asked if everything was okay.

"Are you okay?"

"Yeah, I'm just a little pissed off."

"Why so?"

"You see that guy playing pool?"

"Which one?"

"The one with the white baseball cap on."

"Which one?"

The one still wearing his jacket."

"Okay...what did he do?"

"I was standing behind him, facing in the other direction, and he was about to shoot or something, and he turned to me and told me to get the fuck out of his way, in a really nasty voice."

I've really never heard anyone tell someone to get the fuck out of their way in a pleasant tone before. But I took her word for it. I tried to stare the kid down, but he was oblivious to anything but the pool game.

This is when the sticks started to rub together and a thought flashed across my brain.

At this point, I would like to describe the characters to you in detail:

Rude Boy: 5'10", 160 lbs. max., skinny, dressed like everyone else in this town...baseball cap (white), conservative haircut, Starter jacket (Hornets, I believe), jeans and Nike sneakers: typical Long Island clone.

Eoin: 6'1", about 230-240 lbs., dressed in all black: shirt, jeans boots, everything, completely bald with scars on the back and top of his head, a gap between the front teeth of his big, boyish smile, and a blood-red goatee, minus the moustache. Sort of like a post-apocalyptic Johnny Cash.

Leah: 5'2", her weight is unimportant...I am a gentleman. Quiet, unassuming young woman.

Me: You know me.

Eoin approached as the fire was starting to catch in my brain. Rumor. Yes, I felt like the mad scientist, and here came my Frankenstein. Mary Shelley would have been proud.

"What's going on, bubby?"

"Eoin, Leah has a problem. It seems like a boy playing pool was very rude to her and used an intimidation tactic to get her out of his way, instead of asking politely."

"Which one?"

"The one with the white...the guy with the Hornets jacket. I want you to do me a favor, Eoin. Go over there and give him a big kiss. For me, okay?"

"All right."

Eoin walked over to the kid and planted a wet one right on his lips, knocked his cap off and everything. The kid stood there in shock and looked around to see if anyone had noticed, but I had already turned my head to keep from laughing. Eoin walked past me, smiled, wiped his lips and went to the bar. I handed him a five for the next pitcher. The seed had been planted. Now to cultivate.

"Leah, I think I fucked up. I told Eoin about what that guy did and he went and spoke to him, but it seems that he doesn't care. I think I should talk to him after his game."

Eoin returned with the pitcher of beer and filled us all up. Leah and Eoin started some small talk and I walked off to speak with Eoin's little buddy. I walked alongside of him, leaned against the wall next to him, stood there for a while, arms crossed.

"Hey buddy...did I see wrong or did that guy over there just...kiss you?"

"Yeah! I don't know who the hell he is, and he walked over here and fuckin' kissed me!"

"Shit, that's a problem. You know what he did?"

"No...what are you talking about?"

"You're not from Brooklyn, are you?"

"No."

"What he did, we call the 'Kiss of Death.' You see, I'm from Brooklyn...and he obviously is. Look at him."

As we looked at Leah and Eoin, they were both looking back at us, Leah with a scowl on her face, staring, and Eoin with an ear-to-ear grin.

"Oh shit!" I said, as I turned to face him. "She must've told him about it, too. You see that girl he's talking to? She told me that you were really rude to her before...told her to get the fuck outta your way or something." He shook his head at me. "I understand, I understand...Sometimes women make you like that, but not everybody's as open-minded as me. She musta told him." The look he gave me was one of complete confusion.

"I don't remember saying that. I'm really sorry."

"Shit, don't apologize to me, I don't know anything. All I know is what I've seen. Look, back home, you know, in Brooklyn, we have a code among men. You know...we take care of one another." As I spoke, the Brooklyn accent steadily came out, my hands became more animated as I went on, until I was Joe Pesci, straight out of GoodFellas.

"I'm serious, brother. I don't like to fight anymore; that's why I moved up here, into the sticks. But damn! If Brooklyn doesn't follow you wherever you go! Fuck!" The boy was starting to look nervous. I was about to lose it and laugh in his face.

"You got any friends with you?" He glanced from side to side.

"I got my friend over at the bar," I said, and looked over my shoulder to the bar, and then back at him.

"Just one? Big guy?"

"No, not really, he's..."

"Shit...I hope there aren't any other guys from Brooklyn here." More glancing from side to side.

"...cause we rarely miss the 'Kiss of Death,' you know. I bet you they're just waitin' to see if it's gonna be a fair fight." An air of shock crossed over his face.

I had him.

"Listen here. If you don't wanna fight this guy, you gotta go up to that girl and apologize to her, but good. And let that beast hear

it, you understand? C'mon, I'll go with you."

Well, we walked towards Leah and Eoin, and as we got to the bar, Eoin grabbed Leah's hand, as if on cue. How I love this kid. The poor boy rattled on, about how sorry he was and what an asshole he was, apology after apology...then, I walked him back to where I'd originally found him.

"Good man. Feel a lot better, don't you?" And I walked away, before he had a chance to answer. I went back to Leah, Bernae and Eoin, and filled them in on what had just transpired. We all had a good laugh at this poor boy's expense. Although Leah felt terrible that while I was intimidating him the entire time, she was hating him for being rude, so unknowingly, she was being worse. I told her she was in the clear because she didn't know what was going on.

Sure, it wasn't nice on my part, but we're all just pawns in somebody's game, anyway. It may have taught him some manners in the long run.

This really happened.

Out of Mind, a Family

an excerpt

By Alison Burke

...days are thoughts of cloudless skies... There is only one window in this house which faces the beach. I have put my bed here, this large wooden arc of a resting place, made up in ivory like it had been almost a hundred years ago. I am not saying that it has been dressed in the same sheets for a hundred years; it has in that span of time been done up in various patterns and colors: southwestern prints, plaids, flowers, snoopy. It is my grandmother's bed. Generations of one family have been dreamt of and conceived between these headboards. There are detailed carvings and holes where as a child I would often put my hands and get them stuck. My mother would use lotion to get them free.

This bed has been places. It stayed in my brother's room for almost three years until my mother found the initials he had carved on the side. B.S. My mother thought it was a girl he liked. He said it was bullshit. He has never liked females.

When he was younger, he told me that women were dirty and that he was more than happy he wasn't one. In junior high school he would come home and tell me how this or that girl smelled like seafood and that once I reached eighth grade, I too would be plagued. He was not trying to make me feel bad; he was truly fearful, as if he wanted to save me from this inevitability.

He helped get me on the Nantucket little league team. I was not athletically inclined or in any way aggressive enough to play a sport well. At the try outs, I ran to third base from home and as I stood there, I remember feeling at once oddly victorious and hot with embarrassment as the coach and the other try-outs and the spectators standing behind the fence laughed. I made it onto the team though. The coach was my brother's sixth grade teacher. And I played often, under conditions of feeling cranky and tired of standing in the outfield, alienated by kids who got to stand on the bases. The day I almost caught a fly ball was the same day my brother told me our mother was crazy, that just that morning he had witnessed her tie bath towels together, throw them out the window and attempt to climb down the side of the house. My father was there. He stopped her before she got her other leg around and out the window, pulled her back in and untied the towels. My father told Aaron to fold the towels, put them back in the linen closet. He told Aaron that our mother was sick. Aaron said she was just crazy.

I was not fat or inactive like other kids I knew. Like the twins Thomas and Timothy, who would spend all summer on the deck of

their pool eating frozen soda pop. Some show came to their house once to do this thing on them because they refused to recite the pledge of allegiance in school. The show was aired in the summer and after that everyone wanted to play in their pool and eat their frozen soda pops, but I was not impressed. The show had shots of them standing on their lawn in front of their newly painted house throwing a softball back and forth. I had never seen them before or after do such a thing.

Aaron and I spent many afternoons riding out to 'sconset on our bicycles. We would wear helmets and such, kneepads, what have you, my mother saying that the summer tourists, the college kids in jeeps were very irresponsible and it would be a very bad thing if they drove too fast past us, scared us, made us swerve and we'd end up in the bushes alongside the road. And she told us not to stop at the food place with the big hot dog sign because that was where the crazy college kids hung out and drank beer. We were to bring water with us and not stop to eat until we got to 'sconset and to make sure we checked in once we got to town with the woman who sold flowers out the back of her truck. She was a friend of our mother's. Her name was Lucy and she had two sons, Harvest and Angus. Angus was my brother's age. Lucy would give us lemonade and peanut butter sandwiches and sunflower seeds for later. We would help her arrange the flowers in the bed of her truck, eat the sandwiches and ride around the center of town with Angus. Harvest was too young to ride a bicycle. We often left before dusk, as Lucy began packing up her truck. On our way home, we would dump the sunflower seeds in the sand on the side of the road and with the change Aaron alternately stole from our mother or father, we would buy a large serving of cheddar fries at the place with the big hot dog sign. It was there one day that my brother told me again that our mother had spent the morning bending all the forks that were in the dining room credenza, then sewing buttons onto the hems of our pants. He said he spent the latter half of the morning hiding the results from my father. He attempted to bend all the forks back into shape. The ones he couldn't get he put in a paper bag and into the back yard garbage. He then ripped all the buttons off our hems.

Modern Day Alzheimer's

By Jules Dyson

Sitting here, in this room full
of memorabilia, I can't remember
what I'm supposed to be remembering.
I can't see past through these
thick walls, can't find a common
thread among foreign places.

Tonight, when the wind blows,
I don't remember where I should be,
I don't know the rhythm of
the language I speak or the
order of letters I write.

When the lights grow dim
and the stars burn holes
in the deep black sky,
where will I stand to
see the sun push
the moon away?

A Liquored Night

By Jules Dyson

I love the feel of a liquored night,
surreal and frozen in time
as a memento out of place.

You enter the room,
never knowing who or what
you'll see, but always expecting
some surprise, but never counting
on the one that occurs.

Sip just enough to swim freely
through the blood, enough
to leave the head dizzy
with unforeseen love.

And when the countdown occurs,
whether it's New Year's Eve
or a random night pulled out
of the intricate nerves of your life,
you'll know that there's always somewhere
else you'd rather be,
and someone else you wish you were with.

The Spring House

by Cristine Ferris-King

The graying barn walls had long since collapsed and the old barn, in need of final demolition, remained forbidding to any passerby. But the spring house, which long ago fed the barn with water, remained, its crumbling stone walls buttressed stubbornly against the inevitable march of time.

The door of the spring house sagged on its dried leather hinges, but was held fast by a thick-rooted mass of tangled, brown meadow grass and several years of wild grape vine, knotting its way through the rusted iron door handle and into any convenient knothole or crack within its reach.

The sharp reedy smell of chicory hung heavily in the hot, stifling air. Insects droned wearily, and wasps hovered and lit on an old rotten log which lay close by, barely visible in the bare grass. It was all that was left of the graceful willows which once kept the spring house cool on hot, summer days.

The shingles on the roof that were once luxuriously padded with thick, green moss and lichen, were now bare and bleached a nondescript gray. The glass in the windows was cracked and brown from wind-blown soil. A pane of glass had fallen inwards where the dried yellow caulk fell away in chunks. A few strings of morning glory vines that grew through the windows, were sparsely dotted with flowers, tightly shut against the unrelenting sun. Thick, dusty cobwebs hung dismally in the windows like torn lace curtains. Traces of whitewash clung thinly to the limestone walls.

On the floor, several thick brown crocks covered in dust, were lined up along a wall in perfect arrangement, as if awaiting use. Several old green glass canning jars lay smashed on the dirt floor where a tired shelf had given way. The dug-out spring once filled with cold, clean water was nearly filled in with sediment and the skeleton of a broken-down wheel barrow, stored in the spring house as an afterthought and forgotten.

Hate Male

by *Lucy Hurst*

Deborah sat on the bench, a crumbled letter fluttered damply in her sweaty hand. The heat was unbearable and pearls of moisture dripped down her temples, falling into her black eyes. She blinked with discomfort, the salt from her sweat causing her eyes to smart. A tear formed and fell and soon the liquid transformed into a torrent which gushed from her flickering eyelids and nostrils. Her lips parted and the saliva formed a momentary bubble, which popped. Her throat then uttered a muffled sound. The noise turned into a sob. She sniffled loudly and her cheeks turned red. She wiped her face with her bare left arm. She brushed her finger underneath her eye as she caught the tear on her knuckle. She watched the drop settle on her skin. Then she licked it.

She gazed down at the letter and a refugee tear broke loose and jumped way down, splashing onto the paper in a cascade of spray. Deborah lifted the envelope closer and turned it over with her hands. She cautiously opened it and peaked at the writing one more time. The thin air mail paper was like tracing parchment. The thin black letters were sprawled over the page. Her eyes fondled the contents in passionate fascination.

She looked at the clock that was situated at the top of the tower which cast an ugly shadow over the red-bricked shopping precinct. It was half past the hour. He was thirty minutes late. This was not unusual. She was used to waiting. She spent her whole life in self-inflicted patience, the expectation so intense that she was forced to remain. Any normal person would have given up. But she had nothing else to do but wait. When he would eventually turn up it was usually better late than never.

Yet her thoughts were turned to the author of the letter. The question, "Why?" circumnavigated her head. It was from the only man she cared about. Her appointment for that afternoon had comparatively little significance alongside the faceless letter writer. He was far, far away and her heart was there too.

Her cautious nature caused her to retain some of her heart within her chest. She hadn't lost it completely. She had met Chris, long ago on a dream-lit weekend. Ever since, his presence was just a mere memory but his spirit was kept alive by the ping pong of letters across the ocean. The mere thought of him made her heart ache with longing and loneliness. Yet she knew that the fantasy world she had constructed around the idea of him was not the reality. In truth, he was just an ordinary man. In her dreams he was perfect.

The letter that she had held so close to her breast was the last remnant of him that she possessed. Contained within its tattered pages were words enough to break her heart. Her soul was torn, shattered into tiny fragments. As she waited for Joe underneath the ugly clock, she recognized that he was a mere rebound, a soothing comforter as she knew her life with Chris would never be. She noticed his form emerge from the shadows of the shops, but all she could see was Chris.

The Great Lake Review

SUNY Oswego's foremost literary publication

We are a Student Association funded organization which has for over two decades showcased the artistic and literary works of the SUNY Oswego community. Every semester we publish and distribute a new magazine.

We are democratic in our editing procedure. As a staff composed of students only, we seek work with an original, uncompromising voice represented in a wide array of writing disciplines --Playwriting, poetry, fiction, essays, commentary. The harder it shakes us by our proverbial lapels, the more likely we are to accept it.

We take any kind of artwork but usually gravitate towards black and white photos, computer graphics and ink drawings, due to monetary restrictions. Full color everything is out of our league.

As a staff member, one has the choice to help with editing, advertising, and layout, but we stray from the bureaucracy most organizations use to survive. Therefore, no egomaniacs need apply. Everyone else is welcome.

If you love to write or feel you want to become familiar with working on a magazine staff, join us. The more the merrier. But if you just want to submit stuff, that's fine, too.

glr

We're nice people.