

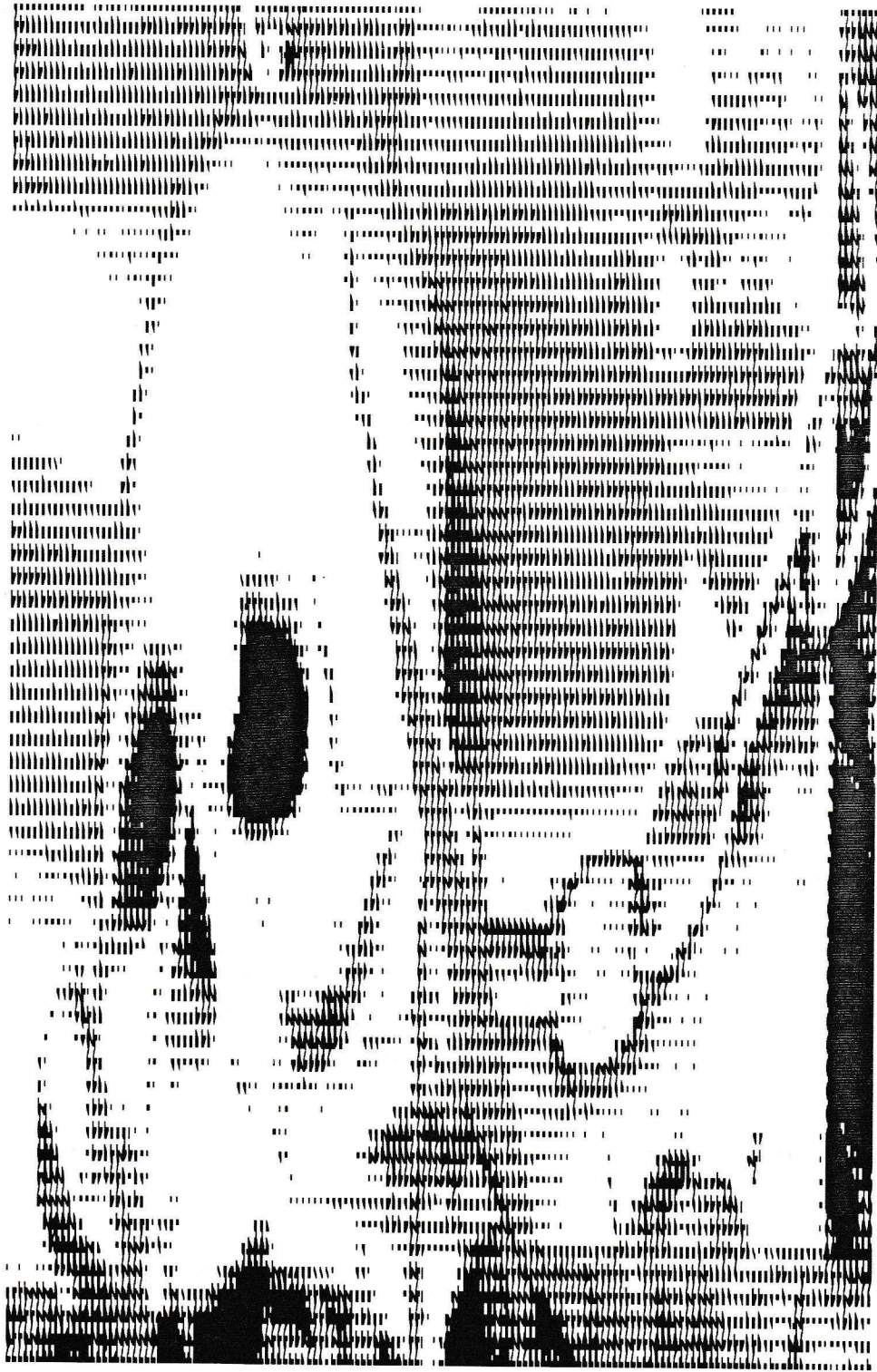
# CURARE

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# C U R A R E

## Rage-O-Rama - A Column for the No Future

by J.D. Rage



Hello dear reader. Time for me to extract myself from the third circle of hell and get cracking. CURARE No. 8 has finally arrived. It might be the last issue, and it might not. Nothing is definite. I'm not even sure that death is definite. Everyday I am more convinced of how little I know and so I hesitate to make any kind of judgment based on my knowledge.

I have been searching for a life partner, a male one, and my experiences could have turned me into a man hater. Some may think I am already one of those pathetic creatures, like the woman who was raving about how much I reminded her of Valerie Solanis after one of my particularly powerful performances. I couldn't get away from her fast enough! It is not good to hate. Hatred is like a black magic spell, it will probably work, but the consequences for the one who casts it are usually more devastating than whatever evil befalls the object of the curse. So, I try to fight it down whenever the urge overtakes me.

I am not much good at small talk and such and am incredibly shy in face to face contact, so I chose to search for a man on the internet. I like all kinds of men so I looked everywhere. I found a tattooed man who seemed ideal. He was in AA, handsome, intelligent (or so I thought) and drove a Harley. He picked me up in the morning and drove me to work and since he was a construction guy, he built a cabinet in my bathroom. One day I told him he was too good to be true, "You must be married, right?" And he admitted that he was. He still sends me messages on the internet and I ignore them. Another little deviousness that he told me was that he had a female screenname. I checked it out. He was a hot babe looking for a righteous dude. Oh well. Do I really want a man if he is going to be running around on me behind my back? Many of the guys who send me messages on-line are married. Did you know that like Bill Clinton, many boys don't think they are cheating unless they go "all the way!"

I decided that maybe a submissive man would be the right choice for me. Regular guys tend to stay clear of me, and since there is not a dangerous bone in my body, I figure it must be my personality. So let me look for a guy who adores a strong woman. I found all kinds. One wanted me to keep him in a dog cage at the foot of my bed. Three of them wanted to wear a dress and stockings and high heels and be my girlfriend. But unfortunately, none of them was really submissive, and none of them really wanted a strong woman. One of them didn't even want to go all the way, so I knew he was worried about having to lie to his wife. Did you know that a separated man is really a married man? However, I am certain that if the harpy, as he referred to her, had any idea of what he did do, she would have chopped him into little pieces and thrown him to the fishes in the lake in her backyard.

What I have learned in my search is the sad fact that many people are liars. They call it fantasy! Those who aren't, who are my age and still unattached, are mostly stark raving mad. To cure myself of any further searching, I watch the sob story show Ricki Lake. The pathos I encounter there always reinforces the thought that I don't need the aggravation. But I still love men, whether they are dashing bikers or pretty boys in lipstick and garter belts. One of these days a real one will roar or sashay in and I will be waiting. Of course he must be a good cook, a great lover and also be willing to wait on me hand and foot.

This issue of CURARE is another great one. We have two young writers, Rori C. Banks, age 12, and Stacy Williams, age 16, who amaze me with their words. Many thanks to those who have contributed time and money and special thanks to this issue's Featured Artist, Joanne Pagano. Joanne is exhibiting her work at the Randall Tuttle Fine Arts Gallery on October 17, details can be found on the table of contents page. I want to congratulate Katherine Arnoldi on the recent publication of her book The Amazing "True" Story of a Teenage Mom and Susan Sherman on our newest Venom Press release, her chapbook entitled Casualties of War -- LUV J.D. Rage.



## Poison Pen - by Roxanne D. Devitt

Call me Roxanne.

There is, I'm told, a mental disorder in which the sufferer is compelled to label people, somewhat like the Jack Nicholson character in *As Good As It Gets*, a mean, crotchety neurotic who uses all kinds of nasty names for humans. In the discussion of this affliction, while slurping up our eggs at Odessa's, my friend says, "I have a label maker. Does that mean I have the disease?"

I don't know, after all I'm not a doctor, but I wonder: what does that make Tommy Hilfiger or Ralph Lauren—the ultimate upgrade of that disease, getting folks to actually wear the labels they make for them? And what does it mean for all those who choose to wear someone else's label on their chests? Is that like Munchhausen disease by proxy?

Anyway. Speaking of labels. I'm changing my name. I have a changed status in the world—having worked full time for a year now—and so am an initiate in the world of adulthood. My new name is Roxanne D. Devitt. You may have noticed it on the top of this page. Was Jan Schmidt. Is Roxanne Devitt. Freddie says I look like a Roxanne. Freddie is a man who has had to fight being labeled all his life, a man whose resistance to labels resides deeper than most folks need to stash theirs. Freddie calls me Roxanne whenever he sees me. Now Chuck calls me Roxanne. And Harry, too. So that's it. Roxanne. D is for Djana. Devitt is my grandmother's Irish maiden name.

Have you seen the flood of articles, national sound bites, human interest stories about Arthur Bell? He's the elderly, African-American man found falling down, wondering the streets, last known address Bellevue Men's Shelter, who was sent to the neurological unit at Kings County Hospital where he told his social worker about his years as a dancer with the New York City Ballet, Katherine Dunham and the Paris Opera Ballet. The social worker, Maria Mackin, wondered if he was wacky or if these were real memories. She knew there hadn't been many Blacks that were allowed in ballet companies at that time, so she called the Dance Collection at The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts to check their records. Yours truly, recently assigned to do telephone service, picked up the phone, searched the database, found his name, said that, indeed, he was a dancer.

The social worker told the story to her friend at the *New York Times*. An article was written. Then there was a local news story on TV. Then national news. 20/20. A media delirium. His label changed: he was no longer some derelict, but Arthur Bell, ex-dancer. He was viewed,

reviewed, interviewed, scrutinized, idolized, patronized and honored. His life changed. His family in Florida read the news, found him and he was released to the Actor's Fund Nursing Home.

And I answered that call, me, Roxanne Devitt, *Reference Librarian*.

A few weeks after the blitz began, I was working in the reading room at the Dance Collection, when yet another TV crew of grips, gaffers, interviewers and directors swarmed in, lugging their Betacam cameras, lights, sound recorders, microphones. They placed a young woman at a computer. They turned on the lights, the microphones, the cameras, and said to her: "Pretend you're getting the phone call."

I poked the woman next to me. "That's me. That was me that answered that call. Should I jump up and tell them? Stop, wait. Cut. Do you want authenticity? Do you want the actual person who took the call?"

But no, I didn't cry out. This was THE NEWS. Not a movie. Not a fiction. I watched this person feign answering the crucial call. And a fine acting job she did. Real drama. Hand reaches out, fingers grasp the receiver, lift the fine molded plastic from the saddle, rush it to the ear, voice strong, full of emotion: "Hello, Dance Collection."

Last year I saw an old friend, Randy Darr, on *America's Most Wanted*. It was a little disappointing, he was the lawyer, not the criminal, but still exciting. Another acquaintance from years ago, also Randy's friend, turned into a stalker who, while doing time, made it to the big time—a made-for-TV movie about him. And now, I've been witness to a television crew filming a news sequence with an actor playing MOI. (Not many writers get to have stunt doubles.) So, this is part of my initiation into the adult world, part of my baptism into my new name, new label—I have been portrayed on screen by someone else. What's in a name, anyway? What's in a face?

Course this probably used up about ten seconds of my fifteen minutes of fame. Whatever. No labels on my lapels.

Call me Roxanne.

Thanks Freddie.

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NATIONAL MAD-SEX DAY**

**SUPPORT CLINTON**

**HAVE MAD CRAZY WILD SEX**

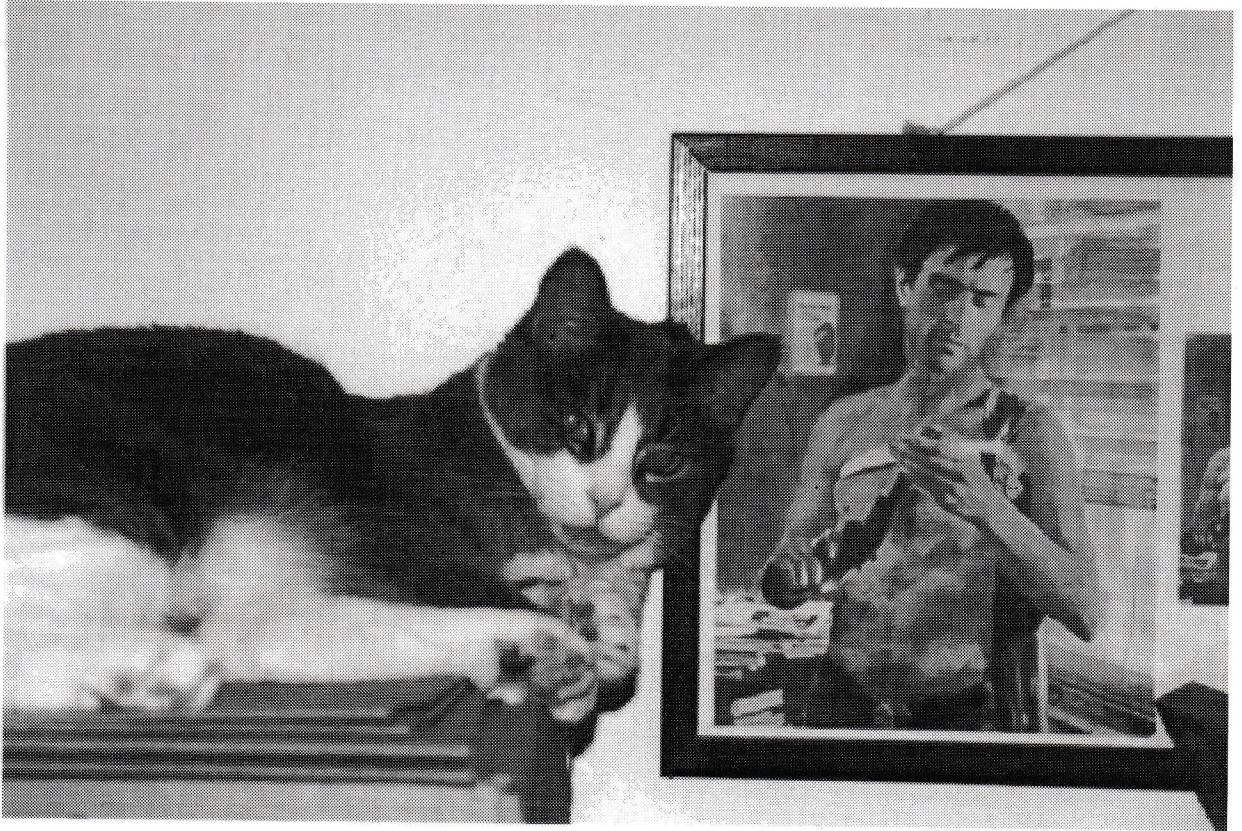
IN THE WORKPLACE

PUBLIC SPACES

LIBRARIES

HOUSES OF WORSHIP

AND ESPECIALLY ON THE FLOOR OF CONGRESS



Photograph by Arthur Rivers



**Ralph**

RIP 9/2/98

Beloved cat of Diane and Dana

Ralphie Boy

named by Dana 9/2/84 after Ralph Kramden  
cuz he's "Big, Fat and Black & White"



**Rantin' & Ravin'**

**Susan Sherman**

FIDEL, THE POPE, RELATIVITY & BIRTHDAY BLUES

I have a new chapbook out from Venom Press: *Casualties of War*. I urge you to get one. Preview it at my web site: <http://members.aol.com/ikoninc/> (This plug was originally at the end of the column, but since I can't depend on anyone getting to the end of the column, I decided to put it at the beginning.)

Several months ago, I was flipping channels collaging the Pope visiting Cuba on one channel while on the other Ken Star was raking Clinton across the coals. I don't even like Clinton, even though I voted for him, not wanting to see Dole win and thinking that maybe, just maybe, he was serious about gay rights and women's rights and health care and racism. Now I was beginning to wonder why, given his hardly radical performance, the right wing was so intent on getting him. But before I could focus on that line of reasoning, flip, there was the Pontiff doing what he does best, pontificating, and I switched from wondering about the Clinton Star Chamber to wondering why everyone seemed to think that the Pope visiting Cuba was such a great thing. I couldn't help remembering the scene of Ernesto Cardenal, poet, priest, revolutionary Sandinista, kneeling to kiss the pope's ring when he visited Nicaragua and being told to essentially get his act in order or he would be thrown out of the priesthood for being political—no ring for a revolutionary. The pope also failed to say anything about the attacks by the contras which were devastating parts of Nicaragua at the time.

Besides the fact it might help ease up the blockade a little, a stronger Catholic church under the pope's tutelage hardly bodes well for either women's or gay rights or liberation theology—all of which had finally have taken an upturn in Cuba after many disastrous years under the influence of Soviet ideology and remnants of pre-Revolutionary macho. Hello Papa. Good-bye easily accessible birth control—if there's anything available anyway thanks to the embargo. Good-bye divorce, abortion on demand, the easing of repression of homosexuals. Hello freedom. As long as you do what the church demands. There were a lot of people weeping over that visit, and I was among them.

And where does relativity enter into all this? It sounded good in the title. It's also part of a new course I'm trying to teach this summer: "Sex, Money, and the Theory of Relativity." Which is just an offhand way of teaching Marx, getting a few licks in (excuse the metaphor) at Freud, and talking a little about Einstein, who taught us you can't even depend on time and space. Even though he didn't think God would play dice with the universe. That was a jab at Quantum theory and all such theories of probability. I wonder how far science can really get continuing to smash elements into smaller and smaller pieces, or whatever they call whatever they get from smashing whatever it is they smash.

I've also been thinking a lot about food lately. A friend who used to be a chef is now back in school writing on philosophy and food. Mostly though I'm thinking about food because I am still eating too much and getting more out of shape by the minute after most of my life being thin and in relatively good shape. I try to avoid watching the Discovery Channel which seems to delight in programs that show animals killing and eating each other. It seems that not only do animals spend most of their day looking for food—when they aren't sleeping—but that killing originates from the necessity to eat. The animal vegetarians get killed by the carnivores, who fight with other carnivores in what is known as the food chain. When it comes right down to it, it's all about food. Remember Cain offered god veggies and Abel offered a savory meat sacrifice. And god rejected the veggies (actually it was grain) and Cain got so mad he killed Abel. Sort of another meat offering. And god put the mark of Cain on Cain and he had to wander the world in exile.

All about food.



So maybe the title of this column should really be Fidel, the pope, relativity and food. But since I'm writing this on my birthday, I decided to put my birthday in the title. And the blues part is about thinking about all these things and getting older and please remember, if you've gotten this far, to buy my chapbook. Here's a poem:

#### SIXTH STREET RHAPSODY

Not a symphony or the blues not jazz  
an opera aria there has to be movement  
plenty of it people crossing criss-crossing  
sidewalks streets twisted ribbons of  
sound looking for dinner a clandestine smoke  
beer or just walking because its spring  
apartments beginning to swell with  
heat the air already thick too dense to  
breathe Perhaps a rhapsody is best something  
dramatic a bit old-fashioned out of step  
out of sync Apple the mouth says Where are you  
the ear detects The confusion of not knowing  
what to believe how to act what to say  
Maybe you'd call it blues a good Nineties version  
of a Fifties tune But there's no magic on earth  
that can do that bring back the past Get real  
it's not spring it's summer it's hot  
the streets are crowded it looks like rain

## Charlene Cambridge

HAPPINESS JOY FREEDOM

I FIND MYSELF DANCING WHILE SITTING IN MY CHAIR  
IMAGES OF MOTHER FLASH RANDOMLY IN BLACK AND WHITE  
MOTHER SMILING AT THE SEASIDE  
MOTHER FROWNING IN CONCENTRATION  
PULLING SEA URCHIN SPINES WITH EYEBROW TWEEZER  
MOTHER DRIFTING ABOVE THE UNDER TOW  
WHILE I CRY HELPLESSLY ON THE SAND  
MOTHER PULLED IN BY A FISHING BOAT  
HER SUIT DISARRAYED TO EXPOSE ONE SAGGING BREAST  
MOTHER SMILING AT THE SEA SIDE  
SAYING TO FATHER  
MAKE SURE THE GIRLS LEARN HOW TO FLOAT

**William Beyer**

TORNADO

First sighted at 2:47

this April afterneen,

the tornado

moves rapidly;

hinting chaos.

A sudden mood  
of panic  
lingers;  
suggests immediate danger.

Advancing from barn  
toward indefinite shape  
of farmhouse,  
I move cautiously,  
with increased concern  
through illusive wall  
of continual black dust;  
listen to relentless voice  
of close,  
desperate wind.

## Laura Joy Lustig

kerouac's musical  
made me feel.  
edges of tables rough  
& just how tight my pants were/  
that long lines are okay  
& squares are much more attractive  
than cute ones  
that never heard of long lines/  
systems of disbelief  
--too busy avoiding vision  
& those inquiring faculties  
that conjure opinion.  
make me see looking is easy/  
what i do best/  
what most hate most  
of me  
--long-lined/  
waiting  
for anything eternal

## John Iversen

### DAYS COME BACK (for Mike)

We hung out at the watering holes  
In the springtime we'd catch tadpoles  
In the wintertime we'd walk on thin ice  
Guess we both fell through once or twice

We liked to swim at the high school pool  
Took up tennis, golf, touch football too  
In your basement we learned to shoot pool  
So all the guys would think we were cool

We were twelve years old at the time  
Even when it rained, seemed like sunshine  
Didn't have no cares, didn't feel no pain  
Wish those days could come back again.

Smoked cigarettes down at the stream  
Small town boys with bigger dreams  
When the folks started treating us mean  
Happiness was bought with a dime ice cream

If I knew then what I know now  
I'd change what's happened somehow  
Bring you back from that destiny  
My best friend for eternity

### FOUNTAIN OF CANDY (Robert/Richard)

The candy-like quality of your  
Voice drips sweet water  
On the mud-cracked creek  
Bed of my soul  
Speak, slake my thirst

As your face softens  
You look twenty years younger  
You unmask the kindest,  
gentlest person in the world



Fisherman - Joanne Pagano

## Lawrence Miles

### Everyone Looks Like Lisa

Been in this dive  
Thirty minutes  
I've seen no less than six people  
Who look like Lisa  
The girl I bumped into here last week  
And talked to without getting the phone number  
Which is usually a fatal mistake  
But she said  
"I'm sure we'll bump into each other next week"  
And like a fool I left it at that

Been in this dive  
Thirty-one minutes  
It's the following week  
I'm sure I haven't bumped into her  
Although now I've seen a dozen people  
That look like Lisa  
And I don't know who to bump into without  
Looking like an idiot and hearing  
"My name's not Lisa, asshole!  
Hey come here and look at this asshole  
Who called me Lisa!"

Been in this dive  
Thirty-two minutes now  
If I had two more beers in me  
And the guts that go along with it  
I'd go up to each one of these  
Lisa lookalikes  
And ask them all what they are  
But what if all of them are named Lisa  
What if they are all related  
What if they are twins and identical cousins and the like  
Can you honestly expect me to take that risk?

Been in this dive  
Thirty-three minutes  
I finally climb to the balcony  
And look down  
And suddenly I realize  
Everybody looks like Lisa  
So with nothing left to lose  
I dive off the balcony  
And into the pile of moshers  
I take a dozen or so out  
And upon examining the carnage  
I see that the body to my right is Lisa  
Now all I have to do is  
Get her awake again and  
Mission accomplished

## Cheryl A. Townsend

### FRESH HELL

I want to be scathing  
and leave my men bathing  
in terse verse and metaphoric love  
I want to radiate  
Cause them all to masturbate  
at thoughts of sliding in me like a glove  
Let my poetry evoke  
unyielding urges to poke  
the vortex deep within my thighs  
Oh they can all have me  
within their won fantasy  
and I'll tell them that they were all lies.

## Tom Baer

Apron

My grandmother  
boiled  
corn meal  
to a pudding,

cut it  
with a  
white cotton  
thread,

died  
in  
her  
apron,



## Frankie Clinton

### NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

In my neighborhood this week:

Two subway trains collided and fell off of the elevated platform, and burst into flames.

A row of stores burnt down.

A woman left her two foster children, ages 3 and 4, alone, to die in a fire.

Four people were murdered in a three-day period.

In my neighborhood this week.

Blood: bright red: luminescent;  
Runs and pools in the dips and channels  
of slick black asphalt;  
Escaping to its origins;  
Bitter and Defiant;  
Against sheets of man-made stone;  
Harder and colder than diamonds could ever be;  
The cycle continues;  
Some would observe and say  
that the sky has caved in;  
But it never will;  
It's just a matter of perspective;  
It's all just simple physics in progress;  
Sometimes, on a scale so grand,  
it eludes the comprehension of limited capacities.

There is really no such thing as true anarchy.  
Even an event as random and chaotic  
as an explosion can be diagrammed,  
and explained,  
and justified,  
with the proper science.

Everything is sequential;  
and consequential;  
It's just difficult to visualize;  
From the plastic eye  
of a child's forgotten teddy bear;  
Dripping invisible tears;  
Inside a rusty garbage can;  
On corners where blood and asphalt  
continue the dance;  
And man-made stone is allowed to repeat history  
Every time a pair of human hands  
Kills.

Blessed mother; wept into her bleeding hands;  
Open sores of her life, revealing the offspring  
of her newly split-open stomach;  
Something she had just given birth to  
was both so beautiful, and yet so revolting to her;  
She looked into the hollow skull of the moon;  
And shuddered at the sight of what was to come;  
She already knew it; and was powerless  
over the truth that she had to acknowledge;  
The process had begun long ago,  
And was merely continuing;  
Another turn of the eternal screw;  
Towards what was inevitable.

Glimmering infants with angel wings  
Floated past old planets  
And circled the Holy Place  
Like sharks bathing their silvery skin  
In the cleansing blood  
Of ancient battlefields.

This Place is a Very Old Place  
Many soldiers have died here over the years  
And their armor has been recycled  
To manufacture deceit.

Appetites have escalated with increasing intensity  
The point of ridiculousness has been achieved  
To the stage that everything begins to eat itself.

When nothing is left  
Nothing will be everything  
It will all be  
What it always was  
Nothing.

She came to me at different intervals  
And told me the story in small increments  
Throughout my lifetime in my sleep  
She continues to visit me in my dreams  
And reveals it to me in little bits and pieces.

Everything finally begins to make sense  
Once the incineration commences  
Deep within the smoldering ashes of reason  
Are the bastard offspring  
Siamese twins of science and the supernatural.

Gleaming lights from distant cities  
Are obscured by the warm fuzzy glow  
Of burning churches on old sick planets.

I can't understand it.  
Yet, somehow, I can.  
Everybody cries.  
Everybody dies.  
It just goes on and on.  
All this senselessness.  
It all has its place.  
A living example of natural selection.  
Social Darwinism continues.....

I live in the third world.  
The Bronx, New York.  
God bless America.



Photograph by J.D. Rage

## Stacy Williams

### The Illusion of Security

Compound eyes and discoballs danced in supposed reality as the blue screen became a distraction of the past. The ceiling advanced inward, threatening mental discomfort. Somewhere a bee sighed determinedly and launched an attack on a drain pipe. It seemed that today was not the day for inspiration.

She wondered why it was today, at the peak of indifference, that she had decided to settle at the computer. It wasn't as though a story were planned out, just a bit of emptiness needed to be filled in the absence of food and emotion.

She longed for iced tea, and only laziness stood in her way. A vague pain flitted in her chest as she reviewed the options: sit, walk, ponder. As the laziness drained, the second option became increasingly appealing.

The door resisted discouragingly, but yielded to a second shove. As she fell into the world, the heat fell against her.

At a fork in the path, she chose civilization, wanting lives to watch. It made her feel wonderfully aware of existence, distantly powerful. An ant scrambling up her leg split her thoughts, causing her to thrash wildly and look rather demented to a passing family on bicycles.

Through the trees and across the movie theatre parking lot, the walk was the same as usual. Obnoxious dog, gawking neighbors, speeding cars. The mall stood ahead, bewildering in its consistency. Always the same cars, the same grocery shoppers, the same atmosphere of business. She entered the usual cafe. A sweep of her pockets produced a wad of dollars, along with hope. Both faded as the wad crumbled into only two distinct shapes. No exquisite dessert today. Perhaps a bagel. Suddenly, her hands felt dirty.

She nudged the bathroom door with her shoulder, not wishing to further contaminate her hands. Just as relief seemed within her grasp, the faucet refused to budge. Frustration dripped down her neck as the struggle increased in fury. With a sudden jerk of the faucet, she lost all remaining balance and slammed into the wall, causing it to collapse in a fit of dust.

Reflecting on the utter absurdity of the situation, she sat for a moment before giving in to the new surroundings. She was now outside, in a clearing surrounded by trees. All was overwhelmingly green and quiet.

Without knowledge of another option, she stepped forward; tentatively absorbing the oddity. As she turned around to resume the disinfecting of her hands, something was clearly missing. Perhaps it was the bathroom, but upon further examination she realized that it was the entire building.

She refused to acknowledge the surreality before her and proceeded across the clearing to the edge of the trees. The air ahead undulated, peeling backward to reveal a man. A smile crept across her face as he approached. He was tall and lanky, an emaciated charisma perched on his presence. His hair crackled between blonde and black; an indistinguishable mass of color, broken in by countless dye jobs. He, to her, was the epitome of appeal. He was all that she wanted and, in a way, all that she wanted to be. He grinned through dark, bottomless eyes; slithered forward, and motioned to her to follow.

"I heard that you were addicted to gambling." His voice provoked green images within her taunted mind.

"Only in arcades." The response came without thought and it was somehow understood by both.

The two drifted across the endless plains until a lake wandered up before them; a magnificently comfortable bench at its shore. They sat, only now understanding the impossibly clear night sky looming over them.

"Having trouble?"

She jumped, his icy voice resonating within her spine. She shuddered. Huh?"

"They told me about your writer's block."

"What? Oh, yeah." That world seemed now only an ill memory "What about it?"

"I have a few suggestions." He paused, looking slyly skyward.

"Well?"

"Write about me."

"You?"

"Do you want me?"

"What?"

"Write about what you want. It can be real. Envy, desire. Delicious themes, don't you think? Pathetic little creatures such as yourself can get a little taste of ecstasy."

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"You can seem secure. Not many people are willing to lay every craving on the table, to let truth head the... the christmas list, if you will."

She was completely hypnotized, seduced by his distorted logic. "Who are you?"

"I think that you can figure that out."

She shook her head.

"I am a myth," he paused, "...don't think too hard. I underlie the illusion of security." With that, he rose to his feet, and she reached out for him. He was gone. She couldn't help but feel alone and empty, yearning for his sinister presence.

The lake and the starry dome above dissolved. What remained appeared to be a waiting room. The walls held ambiguous pictures of landscapes and nauseating arrangements of various animals. A couch tempted her to sit, so she obeyed. Opposite the couch was a door with one word printed at eye level: TRUTH. Immediately upon reading this, she rose and knocked on the door.

"Hello?" No response. "Excuse me?" She paused, hoping for a voice from beyond the mysterious door. "Please, somebody be there! All I want are some answers! I need to talk!"

"So you want to come in, eh?"

She immediately sobered, rejoicing.

"Yes, oh, thank you! I just met this guy-"

"Do you like pink?"

"What?"

"Do you like pink? You know, the color? The color of confusion?"

"Yes, actually it's my favorite color."

"The walls are pink in here. As is the couch, and the carpet is a manner of pink as well."

"I'd like to see that."

Well come on in. Come drink the confusion!"

She tried the door, it was predictably locked. Why did everything have to be so damned frustrating?! She slammed into the door, further angered by the distinct flush of laughter coming from the other side.

One more violent movement sent the door inward and she careened into a maelstrom of wind. Her eyes were forced shut in the tornadic uproar. The floor crumbled under her and with it all security was lost in the reeling mass. All was a whirl of chaos, control eroding more with each turn. In one grand lurch, all was still, and only a faint rhythmic beep could be heard.

"Hello? Do you know where you are sweetheart?" The distinctively nasal voice was enough to drive her from her sleep.

"Whathehe...ehewhere..."

"Nonono sweetie, don't try to talk. You had a nasty reaction to those drugs you took. We were afraid we might lose you." The nurse stepped quickly from the room to retrieve the doctor.

"Ahh, I see you have finally awakened. Hopefully you have learned your lesson." He shook his finger parentally in her direction.

She sat up in her bed, shuddering at the needle taped into her arm. "Wait a second, what do you mean? I have never SEEN any drugs let alone...let alone DONE them."

The doctor and the nurse glanced at each other, groping for answers.

"I hardly think that response will go too far." The nurse giggled nervously and looked back at the doctor.

"Yes, young lady; one more little incident like that and you may not be waking up."

"I hate to disagree, but I really don't think that I did any drugs."

"Well how could you have not OD'd, you come to us, oh how you bleed!"

"WhaaatT?!?!"

"Why yes, my child, you jerked and seized, your mother said 'oh doctors, please!'"

"I have no idea what you are talking about, or why you are rhyming, but-"

"Oh, yes young lady, yes you did! Behind security, truth is hid!"

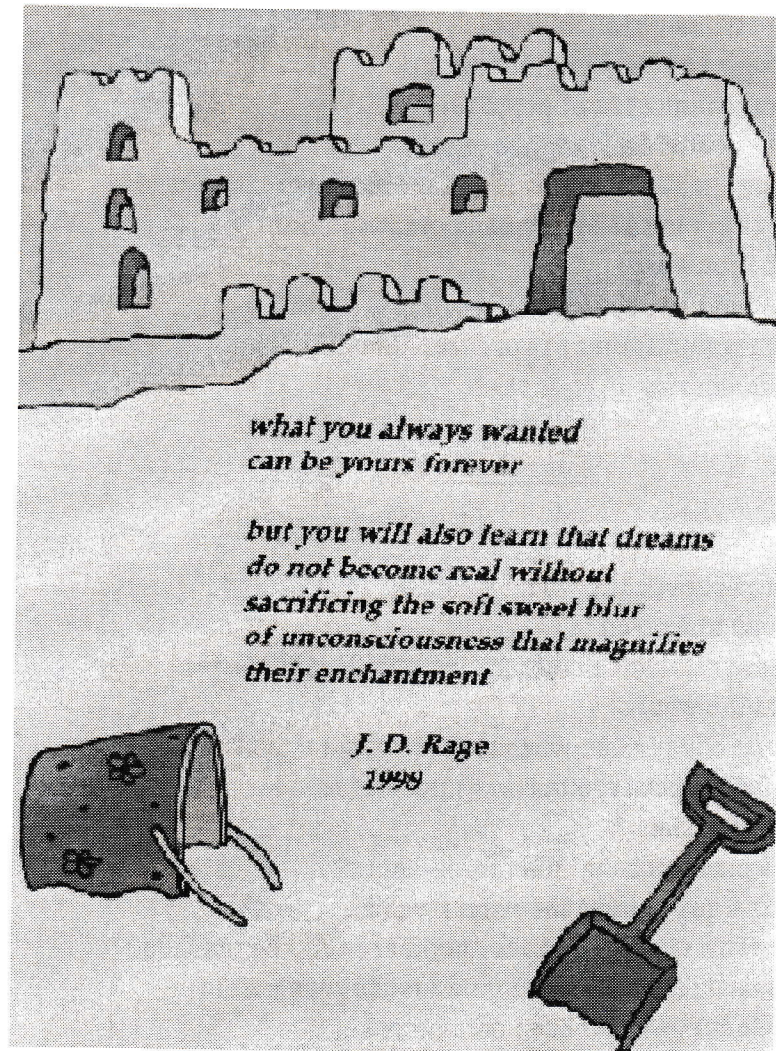
"WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH EVERYBODY?? What happened to sense and SANE ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS!!" Her head throbbed with the agony of her quest. All about her was a whirl of noise and general anarchy. As she fell back onto the bed, everything stopped

once again. She opened her eyes expecting another strange caller, more nonsensical advice, and yet another dose of absolute confusion.

Instead, she saw her room, with its pink walls and stuffed animals, its soft blue chair and familiar posters.

After taking a moment to establish the reality of the room, she sighed through a smile of relief. Her experience danced about in her mind and she was anxious to record it, still unsure of the meaning of it all.

She climbed into the shower, feeling rather sweaty from her torrid journey. The cold water rinsed away the stresses connected to the tantalizing man, the voice beyond the door of truth, and the warped rhyming doctor and nurse. As she slumped down the stairs and into the chair facing the computer, she attempted to call to memory the events of the night before. To her amazement, her mind was blank. She sighed and sauntered into the kitchen. One image seemed to remain--iced tea. As the icy liquid fell down her throat, she decided that the lessons forgotten were simply too much pizza the night before. She sat down at the computer and gazed into the glow of the screen, succumbing to her roaming thoughts.



Design by Susan Petrillose

## Stacy Williams

### Dream Alone

There are few remedies for loneliness.  
One can deny the lack of other souls, or try to fill the  
gap with the soothing voice of the television, but the void still  
exists.

The only solution for an empty heart is a new resident,  
but there is always the one who is too stubborn to admit that  
they are one of the many who do not have someone to greet them  
at their door. Those are the individuals who are doomed  
to dream alone.

### Who Am I??

I am an inanimate object,  
though I am most intimidating.  
I drive hundreds of people to  
their deaths each year because  
when they look at me  
they become suddenly overcome with grief.  
What power.  
Who am I you ask?  
I am right in front of your face, literally.  
I am a mirror.

### After Death

Some believe that when we die,  
we go to heaven,  
where we dandle endlessly among the clouds  
for all eternity.  
Some believe that when we die, we go to hell where  
we can prance around and singe our feet on  
burning coals,  
and push rocks up hills for all eternity.  
And some believe that when we die,  
we return to this earth for another life to be punished  
for mistakes we made in the first knowing all the  
while that we had been here before.  
De ja vu?

Age 16

## Rori C. Banks

### My Favorite Place

My favorite place was my grandmother's house after a long day of school. When I was there, a smile always came upon her face. We used to sit and talk, watch TV, play on the computer or play cards. She was more like a mother and less a Nana. Sometimes my grandmother would go on an assignment and return to NYC and pick my mother and I up in a rented car. Most of the time we went to Yonkers to go out to eat or we would just go shopping. There was a time when she went on assignment for the last time, she was never to return to New York, only in a casket. That favorite place soon became a place of fear, depression, and mourning.

My favorite place is no longer mine. It belongs to another child(ren). For it's their home now. Maybe once they get used to it, it will become their favorite place.

- Age 11



Photograph by Arthur Rivers



## Tommaso

### To Denise

Surely, God, built boys to dance  
Surely, God, gave us music, not by chance  
Surely, God, worked diligently on each  
ankle and on each knee  
Surely, God, put in some overtime, upon  
the eyes, upon the thighs, the exercise  
Surely, God, supplied the spring, the  
bounce, from heel to toe  
Surely, God, reinforced the back  
with dancing girls in mind  
Surely, God, unfurled blueprint  
after blueprint on shoulder blade  
and chest expanse  
Surely, God, with arms outstretched  
and pose engaged in pir-o-ette  
Surely, God, built boys to dance  
Surely, God, gave us music  
not by chance.

### The Librarian

I feel like a book  
Between ends  
Reaching out to  
Both strangers and friends  
Discovering.  
At last  
The pages of my past, have  
Never been put to  
Better, and  
More generous lends .

## Ptr Kozlo

Pins back up:  
newspaper clipping of  
patti smith, captioned:  
"piggybanker of moments".  
fancies himself  
fitting that description.  
knows too: smells too much like  
old creepish one hoarding  
stacks of greased-up clippings.  
here again he's piggybanking another  
otherwise forgotten image,  
scanning his glare back along that  
string real quick. These  
so-called necklaces of dances  
some of them shaped up corrupt in appearance,  
death infested to the feel;  
Art, to an audience of two; and  
both get applauded  
by one, the self-socalled artistrister and  
self-same creepy banker.

### Citizen's Arrest

the president is a citizen & so am I.  
Szuszanna is a witch & so are you.  
the pope has a Polish name & I got one too.  
Scoop doobie doo. Scoop Doobie Doo.  
the heavyweight champ is an audience member, hay hey yay.  
& we're a ratings point, Scoop doobie day.  
the chairman of the central bank,  
& priestess she of the web like trance,  
are circulation figures just like us. scoop doobie pus.  
the Bomb is a media figure and I'm one too.  
& Starhawk is a professor. You should be one too.  
and we know the pope drinks wine, Christ told him to.  
Scoop doobie pew, scoop doobie doo.  
& on Stonewall Silver in a conference room at the Grand hotel,  
I was slicing salad veggies  
with the Sappho Maffiata,  
& one she said: Good slicer we got here, huh?  
& I shyly espied Ms. Hi-GdBye.  
I swear it's true, slice, sloobie slew.  
one she said, Good Slicer. Woo.  
Scoop doobie Do.  
She votes - do you?  
The president is some doctor's patient,  
and so am I.  
Loreena's a bit of a witch,  
and so art you.  
Pope has got a Polish nose,  
& I got one too.  
Scoop Doobie Doo,  
scoop Doobie Doo,  
scoop doobie Doo.

## Tamra Plotnick

### Window of Vulnerability

Shuffling across scarred floorboards  
I make a mental note not to fall out  
the window that wide jaw guffaw,  
the mouth of Second Avenue

Scuffling toward middle age,  
taking stock: one milk grey pubic hair,  
three diagnosable buddies,  
zero offspring,  
scrounged sofa, shameless shadow of foam innards,  
afloat in fourth floor plaster box,  
mind's skylight cracked to Roman garden—Mexico  
or an improvised afterlife,  
fourteen cent savings,  
bubble breasts, rotting gums,  
muscle memory of multitudinous rhythmic nights—  
over a thousand Arabian and otherwise plus  
mellowing stallion loveluck,  
stinging paper cut I'm willing to bet is worse than his  
not to mention accumulated sundried hoodwinks  
adding up to a small "h" personal holocaust  
on extra cumulus days

Scribbling scores of balderdash  
malarkey mental notes  
falling, faking, faring well  
over forever de-generating  
Second Avenue which sheds  
age like fallen fashions  
(parade of elephant pant legs, honking  
ambitions, beer breath eons before AA)  
and belches

I make a mental note not to fall out the window

## Reverend Jen

There's this scene at the end of the movie Foxes where Jodie Foster is talking about her friend, Annie, who just died in a car crash. She says Annie never wanted to be buried in a coffin, but she wanted to be buried right beneath a pear tree, so the roots would grow inside her body. And, every year when the tree would bloom, people would taste the pears and say, "Gee, Annie tastes good this year."

I think when I die, I'd like to donate my skeleton to The School of Visual Arts, but I shouldn't like to die very much. My mom used to say the only certainty in life is death, but at the rate which science is moving, even this is no longer a certainty. They cloned a monkey this year, so who knows what's next.

The first person I really loved who died was my granny, Agnes. I was very small when it happened, but when I close my eyes, I can still see her face, her short grayish blonde hair, her cat eye spectacles and her floral nightcoat from Woolworth. And, I can hear her thick Scottish accent and her laughter. If I concentrate hard enough, I can even see her tiny hands and feet.

When Agnes began to die, I realized that death is a process. Sometimes it's brief and quiet and sometimes it doesn't arrive quickly enough, but it's always a chain of events. Agnes was ravaged by the process which in her case was slow and certain. After two years of living with ovarian cancer she wanted to conclude the process. She wanted to die because she was in constant pain and I'm not talking about an earache or a toothache, but the kind where you've got nothing to eat with and nothing to pee with. My family cursed the laws which prevented them from carrying out what in many cases is the ultimate act of kindness. My mom says if she gets it, she wants to die, and they can throw my ass in jail, but I will march into the hospital clearly carrying a giant bag full of heroin, morphine, what have you, filled syringes, and I would do it.

Right before Agnes died, my mom had her moved from Holy Cross Hospital to a small, red bedroom in our house. It was weird to see someone who I had once drank scalding hot tea with and watched *The Price is Right* with hooked up to all these tubes. It was frightening to see a human being reduced to two spindly arms hanging over a bed.

The night she died, all the neighbors came over. We all knew it was time, and so it was a celebration of her passing from Hell on Earth to the next place. One of our neighbors, Waiter Oats, of the Oats family, the only family on the block that made our family look normal, was clearly inebriated. Everyone stood around the bed, crying softly. Waiter picked up a box of what he thought were Kleenex, but were actually latex gloves. He began to wipe his eyes with a glove, and proceeded to pass the gloves around to the other mourners. I remember people drying their eyes with latex gloves.

We had all my granny's favorite Irish and Scottish tunes cranked up on the turntable, all these songs about what assholes the English are. And, apparently, my granny made a couple comments like, "Bastards," even in her death like stupor. Did she want a drink? A cigarette? Anything to ease her through the moment.

I remember there was a Catholic priest standing over her. See, I was never baptized because my father's Protestant and my mother's Catholic, so none of the priests would baptize me despite the fact that my siblings all somehow got baptized. Perhaps even as an infant, I had the mark of the heretic about me. So, already I knew. I saw the priest dangling the rosary beads over her, and I knew, for all its symbolic grandeur and all its tradition, it really couldn't do a damn thing for her pain. Maybe that's why, as a child I never prayed, but opted instead for saying, "I love you," to each of my relatives individually before bed, a time consuming ritual for all involved, but one that has stayed with me.

My granny was a storyteller. She told me fantastic tales that made my toddler ears perk up with curiosity. One thing she told me and my sister is that angels flew over our beds at night, but she said if we opened our eyes they would disappear. I think what she was trying to say is that you can't see faith. All the trinkets of the church, the rosary beads, the reliquaries, the big funny hats, the wine and wafers, and maybe even the church itself, don't equal faith. Real faith is invisible and indestructible. All the really beautiful things are invisible.

## Diane Spodarek

### Drinking & Driving (from 'The Ugly Building & Other Drunk Monologues')

*A woman tries to explain the circumstances leading up to her car accident that resulted in her death.*

When a woman says no, she means *no*, drunk or sober or comatose or passed out, blacked out... whatever. That will stand up in court. But I can't go to court now. I'm dead. But I'm still drunk. It's weird. If you're dead, will you get a hang over? I guess I'll find out. I don't know what happened. I was driving along with both hands on the steering wheel like this (*holds hands in front of her, fists clenched at eye level*) and my head forward just a bit (*as if looking through the steering wheel*) to be sure I wouldn't miss anything and I had one eye closed so I wouldn't see double. I was being very careful. I know seeing double sounds like I was really drunk but I wasn't. I see double all the time and if you close one eye it's fine. Besides, when you're from Detroit, like I am, a car is just an extension of your arms and legs.

I'm waiting to hear if anyone else was killed in the accident 'cuz it has something to do with where I go for all eternity. The odds are probably high that someone was killed. Maybe even a van full of school children. Sometimes whole families get killed and the intoxicated driver walks away, but not me. So I'm waiting. I said, "I'm a Buddhist, does this part apply to me?" and this woman in a long white robe, with long white hair, so clichéd eh? Said, "It applies to everyone." So I said, "Do I get another chance, like to go back in time and do it over, like in the movies?" She ignored me. I guess there's no movies here. I said, "Are you god? That would be so great; god turns out to be a woman after all," and she said, "Just have a seat over there," so I mumbled, "obviously you're just the receptionist." I couldn't help it, shit you would think women would have more power after they're dead.

So I'm waiting. I'm getting kind of scared. What if my daughter was with me or my parents or my whole family? Wow. What about my cat? (*looks over her shoulder*) "I got a cat that needs feeding you know." At least I didn't die in my apartment where no one would find me for ten days and then the neighbors smell it and find the cat eating my face. They sure are taking a long time.

"Hey," (*looks over shoulder again*) "I only had two beers, if you're taking that into consideration... I mean if my drinking has anything to do with it, remember I only had two beers... (*pause*) and then one shot...only one shot.. not even hundred proof...before I got in the car..... (*voice trails off.. mumbling first to them... over her shoulder... then looks down and mumbles to herself about the number of drinks she had..*) ...I wonder if they can tell how old the beer cans in the car are... maybe they'll think they were there for weeks...months... Hey, you got any aspirin here? Maybe codeine?... I'm not particular but if I have a choice, codeine would be nice...."

## Douglas Collura

### How The Ride Was

I remember my parent's green tank of a Dodge, and me in the back, a toddler, tugging stuffing from a hole in the ceiling fabric. And later, my father's Contie that I navigated into prom nights of champagne, stuffed lobster, blond hash. And still later, shifting the stick of my Capri with my knee as I cruised off to college in the alcoholic boonies. And later again, my Bonneville that some Brooklyn punk swiped. I never sported anything that desirable again.

But the car that most often nuzzles its snub-nosed hood into my memory is a four-door, midnight-green Ford Taurus with its steering wheel tilted down into my lap and a fill-up cost of seventeen dollars max. It came equipped with anti-lock brakes that kept me out of the trunks in front of me and an airbag that promised to smother me in case I survived a bad crash.

That car gripped the road well, particularly the one I traveled then, the Bronx River Parkway, winding through green margins of rainy overflow, black squirrels and goslings in the spring. That car was a good size four door, fair amount of foot room front and rear. I could have afforded more, but I'm one person; how much room do I really need?

I discovered how much one night after a poetry reading at the Tuckahoe library. I'd read this piece about my mother pursuing me up a tree. A woman approached in a beige linen skirt cut above the knee, the bones in her face battling age beautifully. She said that she admired a man who could speak honestly about his mother. I didn't bother to mention that I'd made most of the piece up. I saw the wedding band on her finger, so she had to provide the opening suggestions, though I'm the one who suggested my Taurus.

Lust can rip through human bodies faster than the speed of light, but O how my car whisked us to the parking lot behind the Scarsdale C-Town. I shifted over to the passenger seat which leaned all the way back, she wound up on top of me, steering everything except the car. All I had to do was be there and first think cold thoughts, then hot ones when it was time for me to catch up. I enjoyed gazing at her face, eyes clenched shut, straining its way toward ecstasy—it really possessed me. For a couple of months, anyway. And always inside my Taurus.

A good car remains constant but lust flies in and out of bodies and can leave a man restless, waiting for the next heat wave. I must've been doing that that Sunday when the news warned biggest snow ever, be advised, lock the doors, stay inside. So, of course, I ventured out in my Taurus, shooting down from my apartment in Riverdale to see a movie midtown, the weather a trickle then.

I exited the theater mid-blizzard, the roads thick with buried cars and thwarted buses. I followed bus tracks to the 125th street ramp up to Riverside Drive, my best bet home, but that ramp a steep rise. I started up it in low, plowing into bottomless powder, the Taurus's front tires churning something to grab. About three quarters up, I had to weave to keep traction, cutting the wheel left/right, left/right, inching on. I was only yards from the crest when this Toyota pulled out of a spot ahead of me and started to slide backwards down the hill. I mean quickly. I hit reverse, spun the wheel, the Taurus 360'd, but even did that responsibly, spinning off to one side, as the Toyota brushed by. I stopped a couple feet short of a wall. I straightened out, turned around, dropped into low, plowed then inched to the top again. Took two hours to make my usual fifteen minute ride back to the Bronx, but I got there, with one quick stop for take-out Chinese. Chinese that tasted as hot and savory as any I ever wolfed down. I wolfed it down seated inside my inexhaustible Taurus.

I think out of respect I would have hung onto that car forever if I hadn't moved downtown where it became unaffordable. Still, it constantly wheels into my thoughts, filthy from having pulled me through some sort of soggy mess, and all of its windows steamed up a little—well, steamed up a lot—for love.

## Teddy Wheeler

### Blue Boulevard Navy Street

I started to pen a poem ends in song  
Try to ink what's right pencil scribbles wrong  
Can you blame me best friend to adversity  
I sleep between Blue boulevard and Navy Street

Seen the damage done by narcotic dependency  
Way it looks to me pushers addicted as the fiends  
It's the truth birds eye view since a youth  
I sleep between Blue boulevard and Navy Street

Family of victims bereave felonious activity  
Corporate pimps wealthy off prison industry  
Law enforcement agency commit crimes and perjury  
I sleep between Blue boulevard and Navy Street

9/29/96

### Typical Stress

My girl got the nerve to be mad at me  
With audacity she says I spend too many nights  
under the brightest of Harlem lights  
Valid point indeed true  
Constantly worry about me  
Twenty three years of age I was born  
to Skidd Row reluctantly  
Groomed in it, lived in it, getting tired of it  
the very district with histories in abundance  
the epitome of the web of illicit with  
the grandest paradox, Ace Artistic Frontier  
Where dreams are deferred, it's promised  
that promises will be broken  
consistent in my pursuit of excellence  
peers of mine desperately try to distract  
Me, attempts are futile at best

8/97

## Jushi

The evolution

The evolution is coming

The **evolution** is coming

3 bloodied women

3 blue-blooded women ran **amuck** in the streets

**burning** their barbie dolls

for chump change

Instead of sniffing O.J. at the sidebar  
with strings.

The evolution is coming and **Madonna**

feigns suicide by jumping into the local  
goldfish bowl **offering** head first.

The evolution is coming.

It's 10:00 o'clock. Do you know where your **children** are downloading at?

The evolution is coming.

The **fix** is in, the jury's out.

The fix is in, the **jury's** out.

They electrocuted the judge and let the **guilty** go sit on the cutting edge.

The evolution is coming.

Aunt Jemima jumped down. Aunt **Jemima** broke down. Aunt Jemima got down...

Aunt Jemima got down off of the pancake box immediately got her behind  
**tattooed**, her navel pierced, and her nose spread wide open for a double  
ring ceremony

practicing safe sex doing the rough limbo.

The evolution is coming, The **evolution** is coming, The evolution is coming,  
and I don't have a thing to wear.



## Roy M. Lucianna

IF MY CAT WERE THE BUDDHA,  
WOULD I FEED HIM?

Yes. If my cat were the Buddha,  
I would feed him.  
I would procure the food,  
bow down to scoop it  
into his clean dish,  
stroke his furry head.  
If my cat were the Buddha.

EMPTY VESSEL

You put your faith  
and stock in me,  
your hopes and dreams.

I sit like an empty boat.

You fill me  
with your valuables—  
bags and heaps  
of the precious stuff.

I sink quietly to the bottom.

POEM WITH AN ADULT THEME

That relationship  
was about three things:  
me; the head of my dick;  
and my mother when I was  
a little boy.

## Kelli Hartman

WE'RE ALL FUR YA GYRL...

Princess Diana,  
you may be dead, but,  
you just go girl!  
Died rich & thin  
and set for sainthood--  
every wispy anorexic,  
binge-and-purge-a-holic  
dreams of calling that ultimate shot.  
Yo, Diana, you are "*the man,*"  
beat all them ugly Windsors  
in the love match of the century.  
Nobody likes 'em anymore, not a one of 'em.  
While they get old and moldy,  
you can float back and listen to  
Elton whaling' out the  
Di-A-Leuha-Chorus.  
You are every bit of *a-l-l t-h-a-t*.  
Do we ever wish you  
happy ever afters  
after them in-laws from hell.  
Go on, and bust-up  
that homely *Rule-O'-Britannia*.  
Really, don't you wanna  
drop a tiny grenade  
into one of them hats of Hers?  
Listen, girlfriend,  
the right word  
in the right ear  
and that in-bred Ex of yours  
will come back as Tampax-Boy.  
You're well out of it now, babe--  
no more weird looking gowns to wear  
to rubber chicken donor-dinners--  
no more Dodi's coke,  
Dodi's dad, Dodi's dough  
No more shit, from no one.  
Honey, you have proved  
you don't even have to be alive  
to be a survivor.  
We're all fur ya, gyrl,  
we love ya, we miss ya.  
Di-ana Di-ana, Di-ana, Di-ana

written for the Girl Talk Reading @ Cafe' Nico 11/22/97

# Monique Simón

## MEMORIES...

### My Scars

I have had scars all over my body from about age three. It feels as if it started with the sores I developed as a child, those bleeding, pussy, scabby sores that some children (though I noticed only girls) developed in the islands.

I used to wear thick, white, bobby socks that came up to my knee, and a skirt that came to just above my knee, and for the most part, this covered my ugliest scars--at least to the world.

The more prolific my sores became, the more my mother would avoid touching me. I remember, at age three, feeling always scorned by my mother. I remember how independent it made me. How much I began to first accept and then to almost enjoy the ritual of carefully, methodologically, putting on those long, white bobby socks, with a gentle, loving maneuver, in an attempt to conceal the sores, without rupturing them.

I loved my sores because they kept my mother away from me and they gave me a feeling of having an identity that she could not touch, that she did not want to touch. They were mine, and even though they were ugly, they liberated me. I had no idea why this gave me such pleasure, or that the feeling could be described as pleasure, only that it could be described as being allowed to breathe...

I even liked my mother like this. She would provide me with an endless supply of white, bobby socks, making me feel special and cared for, but she would not be allowed to take that specialness and usurp it as being yet another one of her accomplishments. I effected both my joy at being a nurtured child and my freedom to just be me.

There were mornings when no matter how graceful and tender my movements were, a sore would break under my socks, and eventually, as I walked to school, would make a definite, circular blood print that everyone could see. Those were painful mornings. I was very introspective then--worrying whether or not my mother would take me over with her shame and force my breath back into my lungs. I was worried more about my mother's shame than my own. Most of my shame was covered, save one little spot, but that little spot made the island sun hotter, my breath short, my walk long and taxing. The sight of the cement building with the open wooden windows which was my kindergarten seemed to push my and my mother's shame back into a corner, the one where only the children who really misbehaved that week would find themselves. By the time my school day was over, the shame seemed less and less relevant. Still, once I unpeeled my socks, always with a kind of abandon in the act, I couldn't help but wish that something could be done about them, so that I would not have to perform these rituals of protecting my self, keeping it safe for that unpainted cement building and the barrenness of the unpainted walls inside.

I don't remember when it happened, but my father finally made a decision that something could be done about my sores and that he knew just what to do. A man who, although he lived with us, seemed only to appear in my life at intervals, had once again appeared in one of the roles from his nurturing paradigm. Ironically, even in this role, I couldn't help but feel there was something not to be trusted. I wondered what about this would be "the catch." How would he get me to be less me in the act of caring for me? But, one too many red-spots and exhaustingly hot days later, I was more than willing to comply with his "nurturing manipulations."

He had reasoned, frustrated physician that he was, that as salt water in the sea was a cure for this kind of condition, he could bring salt water to me through a mixture of Epsom Salts and warm water, with a ratio of salts to water only his expert hands could prepare.

It was a nightly ritual. Appropriately so, as it afforded me a dark, perverse pleasure. It took him away from everyone and everything around me and focussed all of his attention for 20 or 30 minutes on the treatment of my condition. My condition, though I could not mobilize the words and the proper rhythm of breaths to express it, was feeling a need to have a separate self, validated-accepted, rejected, abused, nurtured, for itself, not because it relied on was generated by another.

I sat in a chair with my feet in a porcelain pail, filled with his salts concoction, and he with "expert" hands, and the attendant physicians demeanor and words he used to confirm his new profession, washed my legs with both his hands and a wash cloth. The salts burned the open

sores and soothed the closed ones. The vapors from the warm water first assaulted my weak, tiny lungs, then forced breaths in rhythms and with depths I did not know I was capable of. I felt powerful, able. My father amused me. I remember laughing, not giggling, in between the sensations of burning, gasping, and breathing, in between the quiet, whispering noises of pain I allowed myself to make. Then he dried me, gently, with a patting motion, as if we both had done a fine job--patient and doctor. I am not sure either of us wanted to heal.

I experienced and impish pleasure--a glee--when one of my sores, or even several would defy his treatments. But he persisted, and when a few sores developed on my arms and thighs, he quickly addressed those with gentle pats of the salts concoction. Despite ourselves, we were healing.

The thick, white, cotton bobby socks could now be variegated with the thinner, decoratively woven nylon ones. My movements as I dressed were less thoughtful. In their place, I developed an affection for counting and naming the shapes of the patterns in my nylon socks instead.

My mother and I had long grown used to me dressing myself and so I continued.

One night, without the attendant ceremony of my treatment's commencement, the rituals ended. In their place were my father's variously woven tales about how he had taken a case that seemed hopeless and through his own medical genius had cured me.

I looked at the scars, the round black, brown, and tan spots--some depressed, some raised. I studied them. Sometimes I caught myself in the middle of the act of tracing them with my fingers, counting them, noting where they were perfectly round and where elongated. I marveled at the ones that defied shapes I knew names for. They were my scars. They held my stories. They were in conspicuous places, not like the burn marks down the side of my left arm and under my navel. The ones shaped like the tip of an iron. The iron my mother burned me with in one of her drunken stupors. I am still not sure if that was one of her stupors induced by rage or by alcohol, both of which she imbibed to intoxicating levels. I was too young then.

But these fresh scars held a story I could remember, one that anchored me in my self. I rarely lotioned my legs. Why would I when few people would see them? I covered them, like I covered my self. I kept them, safe.

My father still tells his "physician's story." And my mother admits her scorn. He is pride full. She is ashamed. I am scarred.

I want to be well. Have clear, beautiful, supple skin. I don't want to hide from the world, now that it is mine. I don't want to spend so much time getting dressed in the morning, cleverly concealing my self. I want to wear ankle socks. Swim in the sea. Feel the salt water all over my skin. Breathe in the smell of the ocean. Notice the patterns of the waves. Feel powerful and safe. Taste freedom as the sun gently caresses my skin.

## Bob Hart

### PLACE ON A PLANET

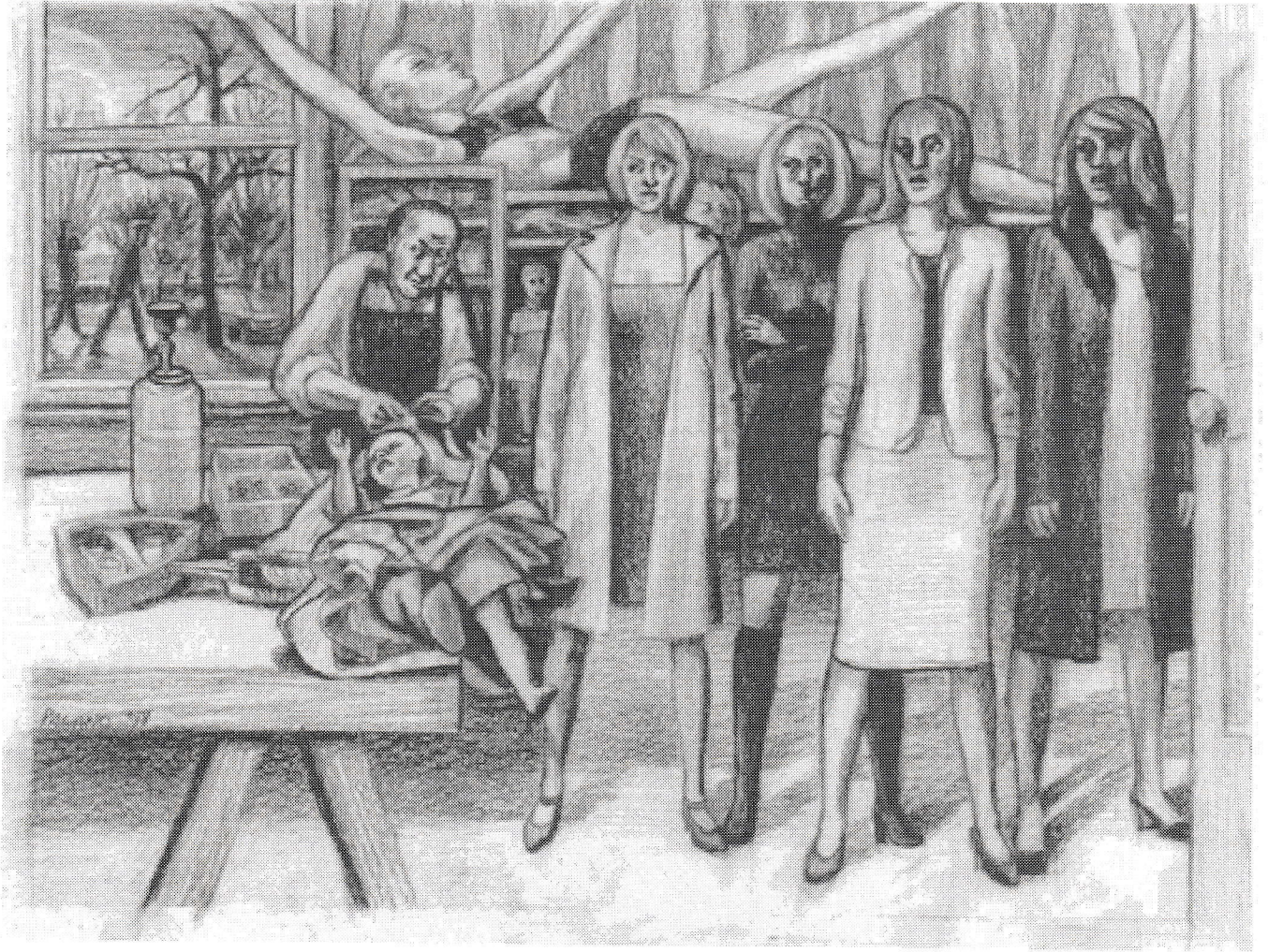
Sensation almost sensational  
to inhabit like the inner fingers of a heart the  
suffering, the grief that breeds in  
every path and street. .  
the lively mother blasted by a bullet, the  
rat tat tat. .  
the wedding daughters running in fear,  
small child cries. . all the small faces, the  
going from crying to homelessness;  
maddness carries a gun and searchers:  
in-gasp it deeply like  
titanic chest--anger bursting in village windows like  
flame in an eye .. in the ghost holes of houses a  
home for orphans--rise on the multiplied  
wail and tears, the love hunger in the hell, like  
jumping as a high wave comes to a beach.  
Rat tat tat, boom and pow!  
I sing because I'm happy



Family Reunion - Joanne Pagano



Dollmaker - Joanne Pagano



Dollmaker - Joanne Pagano





## J. D. Rage

### Trainride

Train 284 back to New York City, Clinton Street, USA  
I am early enough to get a spacious seat on the aisle  
a few rows behind the sputtering baby  
but not close to the twin angelic little girls with red bows  
above their bright eyes and dreadlike braids  
I knew they would soon be trouble  
I hope the baby will be lulled by the movement  
of the train as I hope I will after my vacation  
where I have been somewhat sickly

Quiet falls over the car as all systems are turned off  
soft snoring of those who have not been awakened  
by the commotion of stopping in Rensselaer on their trips  
from Toronto and points in-between

The air and lights are back and after one minute  
the noise level rises  
people feel comfortable with their coughs, giggles  
and briefcase snapping when there is some kind of  
background hum to mask the rudeness  
of their human sounds

I am going home  
sadly leaving this soft mountain paradise  
fashioned by my oldest friend  
we are leaving the station and behind me  
are a million fragmented memories  
of the visions seen  
while working here, pulling weeds in the garden  
five drops of rain alert me to  
the impending flight of a Turkey Vulture  
low above my head as if in some primal  
communication  
It has just abandoned the mutilated body  
of a carrion woodchuck down the road

this morning we saw the corpse had been moved  
by the fury of those who would devour it  
to the left side of the road  
although the previous evening  
Bonnie had eased the fresh carcass to the right shoulder  
by one claw, gingerly, in case of rabies,  
so it would not be run over again  
A heavy body, spiritless,  
taken in its prime  
unnaturally demolished by a metal machine

death was all around us  
the small yellow bird  
who tried to fly through glass at high speed  
the broken egg tossed by swallows  
from their nest  
the woodchuck  
and the phantoms who joined us in the evening  
to listen to our worldly woes, offer solace  
and promise visitation

Steve's elemental self, providing humor  
to Roger's serious explanations  
I suspected Roger of giving a fake name  
when whispering a response to our inquiry  
into the depth of my brain  
both of them were probably aspects of  
our previous escort, Verdugo, now wearing a  
segmented costume

I was watching these things inside my eyes  
and saw the greenish blue aura wash  
into a bright dark cobalt extending from the center  
of the candlelight to enfold the assembled humans,  
their protectors and companions  
following into the pits of ourselves, a rushing  
ribbon of electric white  
a healing force wearing a trickster's hat  
composed of a laughing cartoon alligator

with large hypnotic eye that was sucked  
into our cores and the blue gone  
and all gone but the six white candles  
and their flames  
in the center of the table  
They rose diagonally  
into Art Deco candelabra designs  
suspended in midair

We emerged, my friend and I  
from our trances and encounters with  
time and eternity, regretfully

I went to sleep that late night with visions of fireflies  
and fairies appearing as the lights of fireflies  
and wild eyes masked by the lights of fireflies

Now I am on the train to home  
leaving one part of home  
and returning to another  
sailing over tracks bordered by a choppy river  
tonight there will be fireflies on the river  
and I will see their trailed impressions  
on the gray brick wall outside my bedroom window  
surrounded still, by death and by life  
both more raucous in the city  
but without the distant cry of crows

## Anthony Lucero

### flower boxes

before there were nothing  
but seeds and the few that came  
up were gotten by the birds or the  
weather or something and then  
evan's wife laurie gave me  
a poinsettia she claimed would  
not die but it died within a matter  
of days and i told her so and then I-  
lene gave me a sunflower which was  
doing just fine but then i had to go  
out of town and when i came back the first  
time it was almost dead and when i came  
back the second time it was long since dead  
and so i didn't plant nothing after that  
and one day i was coming down the alley up  
the alley i should say and i looked up  
at my windows and there they were those two  
little coffins the wooden bones of a poinsettia  
on the left and the brown carcass of a sunflower  
on the right and my blinds were shut tight and  
i thought yes that is where i live and i walked up  
the stairs opened the door closed it and  
got in bed and i thought about christmas and summer  
and everything in between.

## David Huberman

### The Dead

In an abandoned lot on Avenue D, in New York City's Lower East Side, a middle-aged man is picking up cans and going through debris. His racial makeup can be described as neither white nor black. As a result of sleeping outside at the mercy of the elements, his skin resembles graying distressed leather. White curls of hair sprout from a ragged New York Yankees baseball cap. The overalls that imprison his body have accumulated layers of dust and grime through his years of homelessness. When he opens his mouth, he reveals teeth the yellow color of rotting American cheese. Some of the teeth are chipped severely, some are missing altogether.

Oh, but his eyes! When you look into those eyes, you become lost as if in an opium dream. People claim to have become temporarily absent-minded and feeble when they are near him. The eyes of this rogue are completely unconnected to the rest of him. Mystery and power can be read in them, but don't stare too hard. You will soon feel a field of static forming around you and you may experience a mild electric shock. He seems to be talking to himself, sometimes yelling out single words or mumbling vile obscenities, but he is speaking with the Gods themselves, completely lost in his deliverance.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, you can't bury them fast enough, the dead. Some people are running to their graves, can't wait to lay down in that mound of soft mother earth. The dead don't have conversations. If they did, I would know about it. Everyone tries to make a big deal about the dead. They use all kinds of images, expressions, religions, T-shirts, money-making schemes. Get the deluxe pine box! Makes me want to puke at times.

As much as they would like to think otherwise, the dead don't come back. The dead stay dead forever. Maybe it's the Buddha Buddy System, Jesus, the Jews or the Hindu path. I wouldn't know about that type of jazz, that's for sure. Sometimes I try to forget about the dead, but then, just when I do, someone dies, someone who should have lived.

Getting, getting, getting hit by a car. That there is one thing, that's Fate, but them junkies, now that's another story. Those junkies buy death on the installment plan. Oh that's them by God, they're the living dead. They can't stand their own feelings, they got to jump right out of their own skins! Oh Betsy, oh sweetie, oh dearie, oh Louie, oh Joey, oh my, my, my!

What really makes me throw up my hands is those addicts who tried the straight life. Imagine going against your own nature, now that's something. That's just like a vampire swearing off blood, that's what it is. There's a whole bunch of them trying to make a stand. Recovery, they call it. Me personally, I call it suicide. Slow suicide. Still, ya never know.

So there they are, setting up meetings with each other, talking all kinds of shit, getting themselves confused and driving all the people around them crazy. Preaching religious dogma, twelve steps and all that wild garbage. It's living life clean they say, but they don't know what they're up against. The disease, bad energy, bad karma, whatever you want to call it, comes back upon them in different ways. The disease is crafty. It separates those addicts from each other. It starts out inside them as a small whisper of despair, then grows into web of emotional pain. Death, like a spider, descends on each one of them sooner or later.

Marco couldn't beat it. It beat him. He got clean, but that old disease started stuffing him with food. He was eating everything in sight, like a crazy man. Consume the food. Consume the food, gobble it all up. He got fatter and heavier, grosser and flabbier, until he was so huge he couldn't stand to be inside himself anymore. When he was totally disgusted, he finally said fuck it. Let me use. Let me out of this misery. OD, OD, OD. Death caught up with him, surrounded him like a big black fog.

Aaron had woman problems. He couldn't live with them, couldn't live without them. "Ah, what the hell," he said at last, "let me shoot just one more bag for the road." Just one more bag for the road. OD, OD, OD. He went out in junkie glory, his handsome mug making it into the Sunday New York Times. He didn't even get the spike out of his arm, that was the quote.

Then there's AIDS. You beat out the disease. You beat out your inner demons. You come out clean, but then there's AIDS, waiting for you to pay you back for your sordid past. Monica, Steel, Irene, Santos, Anthony, the list of names goes on and on . . . . .

Can't take it no more. Just too many of them. Too many ugly stories, too much agony to scream about. I can't change the future or the past; just got to let it go. Nothing I can do but watch. Might as well bum up a pint of Wild Irish Rose. Starting to sweat. It's gonna be another hot day on Avenue D. Yeah, yeah, yeah, you can't bury them fast enough, the dead. Just shoot one more bag for the road. Nothing I can do but watch. Aw, let the dead stay dead. That's my motto!

will inman

Maria Theresa dances Beethoven in Ligoa.Duncan's  
Gallery : New York: 1960s

to have witnessed the youngest of Isadora's dancers interpret the slow movement of Beethoven's **Seventh** is to have been present among the tribal council that creates the universe. every step Maria Theresa took -- named another creature, caressed a self-discovering plant. wings in her shoulders shone with galactic whorls. her dark, by now ancient, eyes burned black holes in the river of god's tongue, she swam that umbric flow. her loose gown wove fresh geometries in space. invisible tribespeople stood amongst the watchers not so much marvelling at our stiff costumes as enthralled by the woman's bringing fresh streams and virgin forest into that twentieth century studio. deer leapt through her round-stretched arms, fishes swam silent fugues in golden waters around her feet. even as Beethoven delves origins every time his music sounds, so Maria Theresa summoned living presence in her dancing. Isadora stood smiling among the tribal elders, and Raymond watched with her, not in Greek toga, but in breechclout and moccasins. God appeared naked, her breast-tips ripe with milk, his genitals swollen with joy at the love Maria Theresa's feet wrought beyond floor in dark summoned earth. i was there, that hour orbits in me with more than memory. now, decades after, i hear the **Seventh**, those bare feet tread burning fresh into this instant



## will inman

feeding on shadows

what are those invisible vines crawling through black space? they'll come right down into your bed at night. they'll stroke your face with darkness. you'll pull a leaf and chew it, and then you'll see the vines. their blooms will be heads of creatures and humans, coyotes and chimpanzees, and even dolphins. they can all talk. you'll understand every word but not what they mean.

they'll get under your fingernails. they'll crouch in your navel and under your secret folds. some critters and some humans will be talking to you out of openings in yourself. they'll be you being not-you. being more than you. being who you are you didn't know was part of you.

about then, you'll eat another leaf. you'll feel a brick wall rising in your chestbone, separating you from who you thought you were with who you never were not.

hanh! now that's a trip you didn't have to take a single step to travel on. and a further distance than maps can carry or telescopes can scan.

the vines will creep down your blood vessels, coil around your rib bones, lie listening along the curves of your ears. you'll hear everything and things that are not even there. it'll be too late then: you can't back out. can't run away. can't lie your way out of it.

you will sing the vines and the vines will sound you. and shadows of those dark leaves will curl around you and swallow you whole. if you wake up real, will you know who you are?

**will inman**

albino lover

Clayton was a black guy who was almost white: very bright skin, blue eyes, full lips, hair tight-coiled. he walked with a slight lisp. he knew how to roll his eyes at a man he fancied without getting accused of making a pass. being a between-person himself, he knew all the betweens of what you could do and still survive. he was bus boy at Sam's and Eddie's white-only cafe on factory street next door to Local 22, where i worked, and between RJReynolds Tobacco plants in Winston-Salem in the late 1940s. for some reason, white workers rarely made fun of Clayton. they'd look beyond his whiteness to what they saw as racial taint: they expected most anything from blacks.

one afternoon, after shift change, a husky farm youth, new at RJR but an old hand already at making out with cows, goats, and even with a pig and some hens --well, he made a pass at Clayton. Clayton, thrilled but not crazy, batted his eyes and asked the youth, Henry Hauser, what could he be suggestin. Hauser snorted, **Hell, Boy, you know damn goodwill what I mean. 'Sides, I hanker after albinos. We had a albino yearling onct. Boy, that cow loved to be fucked!** Clayton's eyebrows arched, **I haven't the slightest notion what you're talkin about.**

Hauser hit him, breaking off an upper front tooth. **Don't no animal never tell Henry Hauser No,** he allowed. **Well! I'm not one of them albinos even if my skin be's pinkish. And I think you're quite confused as to which one of us is the animal'. Besides, if your father is anything like you, who knows? I might be your brother,** Clayton lisped around his missing tooth, then strode grandly back into Sam's and Eddie's. Some of us, listening, applauded.

Hauser put a fist through the plate glass and spent a night in jail. he wasn't fired: Reynolds liked their employees to be clear on questions of race and place. sex between two men wasn't talked about and therefore nonexistent. for all any of us knew, Clayton remained a virgin, though i hope not.

## will inman

of wounded furies and fierce healers

Winds long ago were spirits of fallen heroes.  
Winds were joined later by restless spirits unable  
to transcend.

The two forces are not always allies. Often, they  
joust, wrestle, contend. Rages of so many dead  
create substance of atmospheric furies. They meet,  
they circle, they engender vast spiral dances.  
Hoofs of their spirit horses drum up dust, whip up  
giant waves conspiring with skull moon.

At storm  
center, a deep calm moves between. Here mull elder  
sisters and brothers, here shamans and saints  
confer, here murmur young who wear white feathers  
in their ribs, trying to appease fallen heroes,  
trying to ease damnation from the restless:  
the center keepers call on hero spirits to help  
heal the restless, they call on the restless  
to join heroes in a new way.

I have short patience  
with longago heroes and restless dead. Their winds  
break down arbors and rip the faces of irises.  
They torment the living, threaten us with the roil  
of beyond. But under their roar, I hark steep  
chanting of shamans and saints, I hear quieting  
prayers of elder sisters and brothers, I feel  
heartbeats of the young who plant their white  
feathers in my ribs and kindle my blackest rainbows  
to joy.

Winds enter me through my hair and pores,  
they work in the cycles of my heartmuscles, they  
teach me time-leagues of galaxies. They're no  
strangers to my compulsions. I join their fury.  
I sound prayers with the healers. The winds of my  
ill patience, the healers of my broken song --  
are not just out there. Down this wide plain  
of waking, I embrace whirlwinds, I enter their calm  
centers and am still. I set the calm singing  
with sweet silence. Torn irises heal my restless  
spirit.

**will inman**

consider your knees

what do you suppose you're doing here? you believe you stand or squat outside universal purposes? you assume the universe is a great cosmic accident chock with randoms and other macrocosmic deviations? yes. well: if it's all accidental, nothing's a deviation.

so. look at your hands. study your fingers. mull your feet and toes. consider your knees and whom you kneel before and for what. lips and tongue recognize their rhythms even if you don't. no. even if you mistake them for somebody's ever so brief bliss.

what? i won't be caught saying you're part of the larger picture. but do you imagine you're just another aberration in a skyful of breaks and blunders? even your stumbles partake of wingbeats and gravity pulls that help suck saviors out of their mothers' broken waterbags.

god's as jealous a jackass as any down-to-earth plowhand or operator of a chicken farm. jealousy's silly. anyone who can teach himself or herself to wait, can enter the rhythms of waves beating with pulses of mother turtles' tears.

people  
created in universal images can't help  
directions dancing with stars and sweat

## Thaddeus Rutkowski

### SEE WHAT DEVELOPS

All too often, my rope-playing sessions ended all too soon. I wanted to slow down; I was moving too fast. I wanted to make the morning last. I wanted to trip on down the cobblestones, look for fun and feel groovy.

So I took pictures of my girlfriend in bondage. That way, I could enjoy my ropework later, in the privacy of my own pud room.

I used discretion with my obsession--I found a photo lab that specialized in SM. Everyone who worked there was cool. They were all sex addicts.

I sent my best frames to amateur sex photographers in trade. I collected photos of a woman handcuffed to a radiator in Milpitas, California; a snapshot of a woman wearing a leather hood and nothing else in a trailer in Port Arthur, Texas; and a series of photos of a blond-wigged woman tied up inside and outside her split-level in Iowa City, Iowa.

One bondage guy said he didn't know why he tied; he was just born to do it. Another said he didn't start binding until his senior prom.

My girlfriend called my newfound friends my "pervert pen pals."

I began to understand that sex was more important to me than intimacy. I was disaffected with affection, noncommittal on commitment, mistrustful of trust. All I wanted was to lure women into ligature, create images of capture, and promote ropester culture.

I decided to become a professional pornographer. I planned to expand my repertoire. Along with my basic knotting scenarios, I would include stocks, racks, exam tables, picnic tables, dental chairs, swivel chairs, electric chairs, box springs, boxcars, sawhorses, table saws, lacrosse sticks and crucifixes.

My girlfriend told me that if I took one more photo of her fixed up like a Christmas turkey, she would walk out the door and never come back.

I hung up my camera, collapsed my tripod and folded my back-light umbrella. But I did not lose my entrepreneurial urge. I merged and purged my sex-addict mailing list. I scouted for spooky studio space. I changed my name to Rusty Cuffs.

I maintained my romantic relationship but never forgot my knot-headed imperative.

Life, I loved it. All was groovy.

\*

## Mike Halchin

### WHAT DID MY BOOT SMELL LIKE AS IT HIT YOUR FACE?

in gravity sickness feel your skin  
pull tighter about to pop  
head smears as if being suffocated  
under the care of a plastic bag  
dotted line of the highway  
the sun comes down to bore a hole  
in your jaw now everything is permanent  
snapshot hits you from behind  
like a rubber band against the waist  
or some other useless brand of aversion therapy

break out in a rash and head for the open fields  
boxcars trudging by, doors gaping  
behind the frame, an open mouth  
willing to take you in and hold  
your contents, no more than a lozenge  
hide in the corner and  
crawl into yourself, the gates and blinking lights  
r x r and schoolbuses of screaming kids

now where was the stain  
the blood on the autopsy table  
spikes and drips into an eeg unplugged  
drained away from the trees  
under the nod, crushed by the rattling wheels  
fire-retardant flesh  
but still enough to roast marshmallows

the black cloud now spits above my head  
and freezes there, no pickaxe will even make a dent  
the sky glooms over no escape  
we steam like clams  
gurgling suits litter by the gulleys  
and fallout shelters anything left to steal  
we just cover our eyes and wait  
for someone to touch our hand  
so we can get up again and wander off  
an empty shapeless day  
run into a few telephone poles  
paste up flyers, talk revolution  
and fall into the river  
all the guardrails have disappeared  
the mud creeps near the edge  
a hand over a tomb  
don't stop walking on my account  
keep on till there's nothing left

## Mike Halchin

### SCRAPE, CRASH, THE ONCOMING THUNDER

too many wires, cannisters of nerve gas  
mumble undetected from overturned trucks  
plenty of crash footage and flaming wreckage  
watch where you swing that dentist's drill  
never know what you might knock over  
or who might escape  
bones crossed sullen in beanbag chairs  
flaps down medivac your life away  
get paid while they operate  
a vibrating pile of disembodied molecules  
waving helpless, a test pattern  
projected onto your psychic vomitorium  
shredded device overactive  
hyperextended a loss for the future  
tendons abrasive bending a sweat  
that can't take the psi's much longer  
remaining contusions infect the spine  
a mild creme or ointment? no rabbits please  
happy to icepick down a wide variety  
(8 or 9 different kinds) of pestilence  
one that's just right for you  
with a short-term virus enhancer  
at no extra charge

### AND NOW FOR A BRIEF PINSTRIPE SUIT INTERLUDE

dreamed i was  
spitting out cockroaches  
in rapid succession  
like watermelon seeds  
or machine-gun fire in slow motion.  
when i woke up  
the taste of blood filled my head  
and, darting my tongue around,  
i realized  
all my teeth were gone.  
racing to the kitchen  
i dug thru the garbage  
trying to remember  
what happened the previous night  
when two quiet knocks  
appeared at the door.  
i slammed back the lock  
to find an empty hallway and a note:  
next time you miss a payment, it said,  
we're taking the eyes.

## amy polley

She walks the hall to stop, A mirror reflects the past 2 years of obsessive mindsweeps. She can't control the leather belt hanging on the wall. It's shiny --- but so are her eyelids from escaped emotions. She stands on the subway, eats twinkles with beer and talks to strangers on the ferry. Her life is liquid as it flows past the love of one man who loves many. She wants to scratch his back until it bleeds; so she'll have something solid to make time hesitate. So she'll continue climaxing into twilight to knock over champagne glasses and bypass cherries. Nighttime brings solace upon which red is comfort, skin is warm and the lips of her lover can be reshaped into particles of passion. She learns to play the numbers game and, in his absence, continues on. Street vendors melt into her love Puerto Ricans on park benches do the same, and leather becomes an element of consistency flowing rapidly between her legs.

### Livin a Day

A day in the life of  
Aday  
millions  
who bypass Avenue B  
And one--  
who takes the B for Boredom  
and  
creates variations on a theme  
You'll learn to like it  
when you start to swing  
hips to porch rhythms  
And take recipies from  
puerto rican mommas--  
who kill flies with sugar  
See what I mean  
sweat stinks, elastic bands  
squeeze til you pop/in flow  
and know  
that everythings been done  
that's cool  
And Avenues of Boredom  
must be reconstructed--  
shouldered with sugar  
shot with power  
taken and maken  
livin a day.



## Melanie Myles

### OSCAR NITE

She's sitting on the floor of the bus  
spit sticks her face  
lunchtime special crusts the hair  
they weren't hungry & threw it there  
as the note gets passed  
everyone in the class  
giggle preteen giggle  
did Hitler giggle too  
the public hair grows  
and everybody knows  
the pimple swells like her living hell  
alongside fellow degenerates  
whose designer labels aren't legitimate  
and she's the last one picked for the team  
the first one kicked who doesn't scream  
the wooden soldier home from battle  
to the bathroom sink she unravels  
her opportunity full of water  
what's in a daughter what's in a scumbag  
do they bleed too?  
and the knife was shiny the feeling was grimy  
but the oscar nite danced in her head  
alongside other dreams silence the screams  
cuz someday someday my prince will come  
some nite some nite my day will be the sun  
oily fingers drop the knife to the water  
as she scarcely remembered her future fodder  
that keeps the outcast heart ticking  
keeps the anxious mind from slipping  
and she won't give a fuck anymore  
whether she's a scumbag or whore  
to the judgers at her locked door  
she bides her time waiting for her dreams to soar

## Charles Chaim Wax

### TIPTOE ON THE POINT OF A NEEDLE

At the age of forty I had grown weary of romance, but a bit of manly desire remained. I stared at the Playboy Centerfold. Such a woman existed in an alien universe, one I could never leap into. In fact walking up a flight of stairs left me panting for air. People were constantly amazed that a vegetarian and a Buddhist could weigh in at three hundred and forty pounds. In turn I was bewildered by their lack of nutritional knowledge. Macaroons, Ring-dings, and the famous Twinkie all played a part, as did pasta swimming in cheese and oil. And the almighty cashew. A human being could easily survive for an entire week on a pound, so highly caloric was the delicious morsel.

Indeed I met Angie because of my bulk. I had gone to Moe's Used Books in Coney Island to look for *The Joys of Yi-glish*, long out of print. Even though it was the last week in September the temperature hovered in the mid 80s. Moe's store lacked an air-conditioner. I suppose all his meager profits would have been eaten up by the cost of electricity. The section on Judaica resided in the back of the store on three bottom shelves. By the time I had gone through the books I was sweating and barely able to breathe. My throat was tight and felt swollen. I needed a cool liquid quickly. I plodded along Surf Avenue to Corn Queen and ordered a large root beer. Now in this particular establishment they don't give you an item until the money has been deposited in their cash register. I placed my hand in my right pocket where I kept change. Empty. I thought I had a pocketful, but these things happen. I placed my hand in my left pocket where I kept my wallet and bills. I pulled out a fifty, placed it on the counter, and reached for the root beer. The guy grabbed the cup pointing to a sign on the wall: no bills larger than \$20 accepted. For some reason I said, "Turn on the air-conditioner, why don't you? It's like the equator in here." He simply smiled. "Look, I been coming in here for twenty years. Lemme drink, then I'll get change." He shook his head. "Where's the owner, Two Ton Tony? He knows me."

"Deceased," he said.

When I heard that my knees buckled. I clutched the counter for support. Suddenly a woman appeared placing a dollar bill on the counter. "For the big man," she said.

I immediately snatched the soda and gulped it down, then I turned to her. "Thanks," I said. She was a prostitute. The outfit and make-up gave her away. One word led to another. Soon we were in room 11 of the Terminal Hotel. Angie accepted bills larger than a twenty.

When I mentioned my visit with Angie to Abe Waldbaum he was shocked. "Ain't you a Buddhist?" he said. His conception of a Buddhist was a holy man, pure and simple. For him Buddhists weren't really human beings.

But his shock caused me to search ancient texts and modern Zen Masters. The crucial question seemed to be one of abuse. That was certainly not the situation. Another matter concerned inappropriate behavior, another taking unfair advantage of an individual. Such was not the case. I paid whatever Angie asked. But perhaps the transfer of cash debased both of us. That was not my intention, although it may have been the fact. "Well, I'm a Buddhist, not the Buddha," I finally concluded.

I saw her three weeks later in Kansas Fried Chicken. We hiked to the hotel, quickly concluding the matter. As before she was in no hurry to leave. Angie enjoyed speaking of her life as she puffed on a cigarette. She turned *out to* be a natural story teller, her narratives being filled with detail, tension, adventure. I did notice, however, her tales dealt with the desecration of the soul. Angie's words presented a world of pain and suffering. She seemed to stand tiptoe on the point of a needle searching for heaven but seeing only hell.

One story she told me went like this. "Last summer right after Persia lost her little baby in a fire she took to dope. You got to be a mother to know that hurt. The cops picked her up and she

gave Joe a long blow. She said she must have been on him half an hour. Then she said she needed to get straight and could he help her out. He said, 'I ain't giving you shit, bitch.' When she heard that and feeling the way she was feeling, you know hurting, and she just went down on the guy for half an hour and she could have made the money if she was with a regular trick, she flipped out and grabbed his motherfucking head with her hands and scratched both sides of his face deep and blood was everywhere. He never expected she would do that in a million years. She caught him by surprise. It was the hurt made her do it. Hurt coming at her from all ways. You could tell some female made them scratches and you know cops are scared of their wives. They don't do no blows. That's why cops are crazy. His partner went and got some dry ice at Corn Queen. Then Joe put on his motorcycle hat and motorcycle gloves and stuck a chunk way up her pussy and burned out the whole insides. They dumped her under the highway by the ball field. She couldn't walk. The dry ice was still in her pussy. The tender skin up there was all stuck to the dry ice. If she tried to walk she'd rip herself apart. She lay there till morning when some men who work at the TA yards near the ball field found her. They took her to Coney Island Hospital. She didn't tell nothing. She was scared. When the investigator came from the D.A.'s office to see her she lied. She said a short freak wearing a mask did it. I'd be scared too. Everybody just says 'Don't whore no more.' But it ain't that simple. Why you think they let hookers stay in Coney Island? All the sick motherfuckers of the world got to have a place for entertainment. We're just toys."

I don't have to tell you stories of this kind were almost impossible to listen to. Suddenly a thought struck me: perhaps she created these tales, that they were simply a product of her imagination.

Then she disappeared for three months. Well, these things happen. I saw her again in December during a snowstorm. We raced to the hotel, making sure to get a room with good steam heat.

Angie said, "I just got out of Riker's Island Penitentiary." I smiled. "You think that's funny. It's not funny. You don't know what it's like in there."

"I was smiling because I'm glad to be in this warm room with you. I can't wait to hear what you have to say."

I handed over the \$50 but for some reason didn't undress as Angie took off her clothes, then slid under the covers. After she said "You don't know what it's like in there" she lay silently. A moment later she was asleep. I placed a chair near the window to watch the snow somersault joyously from the immense heavens. Twenty minutes later I heard, "Danny, Danny."

"This is Steve." I waited for her to speak. When she remained quiet I asked, "Is Danny your man?"

"I wouldn't say his name if he wasn't. But Danny's in jail doing 7 to 15 for burglary."

"So, why were you in Riker's?"

"I was alone in the apartment cause Danny was sent up like I said. Now I never make any noise. I'm very quiet. I don't play the stereo loud or nothing. All I do is watch my soap operas. Danny's brother, Tommy, would always come to see if I was all right. He'd come just before my stories cause he knows I don't allow no one in the house while I'm watching them. I guess this dude got to know my schedule cause one day right after Tommy left he knocks on my door. I open it a little to see who it was. He pops the chain and rushes in. Then he closes the door real quick with his foot and turns the lock shut so nobody could get in. I started to back away toward the kitchen for a knife when he grabs me and starts to rip my clothes. I told him 'No need to do that baby. I'll strip for you.' But he didn't pay no attention. He was big like six feet and more than two hundred and fifty pounds. Plus he was strong. He tore my clothes like they was made of paper. After that he started trying to snap my head off like he wanted to take it home with him. But every time he jerked my neck to the left I turned it real fast to the left so it wouldn't snap, and when he tried to crack my neck to the right I turned it quick to the right. I kept telling him that he didn't have to go through all these changes. 'Just let me suck you, baby,' I said. I thought that was going to

work cause he took out his dick, but then he caught my throat. I could hardly talk since he held me so tight. I told him, 'You got the biggest dick I ever seen.'"

"Really?"

"I would have said anything but he didn't go for it. He was a psycho. He got off on the violence. Then he punched me in the stomach three times. I couldn't catch my breath. I fell to the floor. He got down on me. He spread my knees with his knees and shoved his click in and pounded his whole weight on me. After he came I was more scared than ever cause what was there left now for him to do but weird things. I said, 'Baby, femme lick the come from the tip of your cock.' I woulda bit that motherfucker right off, then run like hell."

"You could have done that?"

"Sure—to protect my life. But he wouldn't do it. He stood up over me and put his click back in his pants and smiled. Next he combed his greasy hair. He did it slow. I figured he was going to leave. You know, so when he went in the hall he wouldn't look messed up. But, no. Instead he rubbed my pussy with the tip of his cowboy boot, the kind with the pointy silver toe. He kept pushing into me. I flipped when he did that. I thought he was going to stick his whole foot in my pussy. I was froze from fear so the only thing I could do was scream. That didn't stop him, like he wasn't scared somebody might hear. He kept digging the toe deeper into my pussy. But Tommy musta heard my screaming cause he came downstairs and said, 'What's going on in there?' I couldn't speak. 'If this door ain't open now I'm gonna bust it down.' Tommy's voice musta done something to the psycho cause he got crazy. He ran to the window and ripped off the iron gates and jumped out. Then Tommy smashed the door and came in with his .22. But do you know that psycho ripped the gates off the other window and rushed back..."

"He came into the room again?"

"The guy was a psycho. But by now a lot of people were there. He went after Tommy and him standing there with a .22 in his hand. Tommy could have plugged him, but there would have been questions from the police and they might have got him on a parole violation. So Tommy smashed the gun butt across his nose and six dudes grabbed him. While they held him down Tommy cut his face all different ways. The motherfucker *he* was screaming now. By that time the squad cars was racing to the front of the building. Tommy put the .22 in his pocket and wiped the blood from the knife and put that in his pocket too. When the cops came all them guys walked away slow like they wasn't interested in what was happening. The psycho wasn't doing nothing but screaming and holding his hands on his face to stop the blood. The cops called for an ambulance and they took me away. He busted me up and my face was all sore and puffy. They put me in the hosp\*al for observation. My nerves was all shot."

"At least you had time to rest because you look gorgeous now. "

"But do you know what happened to me in the hospital? Detective Winnel found me. I don't know how. And he knew that I had a warrant out on me since '75. He paid the doctors to let me go. Bad as my condition was they discharged me and he put me back on Riker's. When I came up to the Judge and the Judge saw the bandages he said, 'What happened to this girl?' The Public Defender told him that I had been raped and beaten and that Winnel had taken me out of the hospital because I had a warrant against me. The Judge said that I should go right away to Riker's Island Hospital but do you think when I got there they put me in the hospital? No. They put me in the general population. I did 90 days. I just got out."

I laughed because of nervousness. The story seemed so real. Her bad luck frightened me.

"Everything's funny to you," she said.

"Not everything."

"Take off your clothes. Why'd we come in here?"

“Another time.”

She dressed quickly.

“I don’t get you,” she said. “First you laugh, now you look sad. It’s my life.” I touched her cheek. “Does that mean you’re ready?”

“Another lifetime.”

“What?”

“I mean, a different day I’ll be inclined.” I was silent for a moment, then added, “In another life good luck will crown all your endeavors.”

“If you say so.”

THE END



## Bruce Weber

### MY BABY'S COMING HOME

all the bedsheets are stained with blood and come and my baby's coming home. my baby's coming home. the cockroaches defy me to knock them off that strawberry shortcake and my baby's coming home. my baby's coming home. all the cd's by my favorite satanic bands are skipping on the stereo like the devil's handiwork and my baby's coming home. my baby's coming home. the toilet's backed up and overflowing and my baby's coming home. my baby's coming home. my cigarette's are burning holes in the pop art sofa, in the bauhaus rug, in the cubist table and my baby's coming home. my baby's coming home. the local shopkeepers are selling close-up photographs of me and my teenage girlfriend tongue kissing on the avenue and my baby's coming home. my baby's coming home. the rings around my eyes are dark as cyclone cellars and my baby's coming home. i better burn some incense to cover the smell of the dead cats, i better swab down the floors to remove the funky odor of the crushed turtles. i better replace all the blown light bulbs so she won't trip over the pizza boxes, chinese food cartons, canary seeds, beer cans, empty bottles of beaujolais, and the federal express letter from the macarthur foundation requiring her acceptance asap. yeah i better sweep up the foot high debris, scrub down the walls with lye, lance the bugs with a pitchfork, destroy all the evidence of my infidelities, removing every incriminating sign of the hell i've raising because my baby's coming home, my baby's coming home.



IS BARNEY ACTUALLY THE  
GAY GODZILLA?

YOU

DECIDE!!

JOIN US

AT

THE PARADE

FOR THE

TAKE PRIDE IN  
BARNEY CAMPAIGN!

## Carl Herr

### Cleansing

On 42nd Street there are two holes  
that resemble open wounds  
made ready for the predators  
to fertilize and grow walls of glass  
with smiling cartoon characters  
popping Prozac.  
Gone are the junkies, whores and hustlers  
that crept through the maze  
of a Christ like heaven  
for weekend pedophiles  
crazies looking for any satisfaction  
and me  
wondering what happened  
to the videos of teenage girls  
from Holland.  
Does it matter?  
The runaways lining up to be abused  
while an amorphous father figure  
cracks his whip to the left or right  
deciding who will become infected  
or freeze in the cold  
or just take too much smack  
and who will survive another night  
ritually decorated with semen  
and bearing a crown of thorns  
as they are made to pray  
for an insane Christ  
that preys on young boys  
in some remote parking lot  
in the Port Authority Bus Terminal  
I wasn't looking for danger.  
I was just passing by.  
Taking in the paved nightmare.  
As I remembered what once was  
I only wished some rain  
would bring back the scum.





Little Girl's Room - Joanne Pagano

## Alan Catlin

### The Investment Councilor

Maybe I had been working in the Night Club/Supper Club/Lounge Business too long, although I wasn't acutely aware of it at the time. I must have been exuding an invisible but still discernible help wanted personal aura that indicated: Dissatisfied Healthy WM 28 Looking For New Employment. There might have been a more reasonable, simple explanation for what happened, such as being in the right place at the right time. I prefer, however, to see life as a series of enigmas rather than a boring chain of logical sequences.

The dude was one of a million lounge rats that exist in every hotel, airport lounge and nightclub in the world. He was of an indeterminate middle age, skin camouflaged by the best cosmetic surgery, hair transplanting and tanning salon coloring money could buy. His pink ring probably didn't cost more than the average income of an extended family of hard working peons in any third world country in the world for ten years but just about. The young woman he was with probably didn't crawl off the pages of Penthouse this morning and jump into her designer dress, slick gold chains and a prima donna coif job by someone named Maurice or Ralf but she probably had the day before yesterday in another city. I didn't even wait for him to order before I reached for the Chivas bottle and started pouring some for him on ice with a water backer. He didn't even seem to notice not ordering, peeling a hundred from a wad of bills clipped together by a gold money clip in the shape of a dollar sign. I made a silent wager with myself that he went by the name of Nick or Rico and stood waiting for whatever his opening gambit was going to be.

"What do you think of my girlfriend? Pretty slick, huh?"

"The slickest. But you wouldn't need me to tell you that, you knew it already."

"You're smart, kid, I like that in a bartender but not too smart. I like that even better."

There didn't seem to be anything intelligent to add to this bent of the conversation so I smiled enigmatically and waited patiently for him to get closer to the point.

"How's business?"

"Occupancy is about 90% but the summer is the best time with the track coming in and all. I'm not starving and I'm not about to pull up stakes and leave either."

"Been here long?"

"A couple of years. Forever. Take your pick."

"How would you like to make a couple of extra bucks?"

"Everyone wants to make a couple of extra bucks, what's the line?"

"My girlfriend there is a whore, understand?" It wasn't exactly a foreign subject to me. In fact, I had a running bet with my cocktail waitresses on who spots the weekend warriors and new call girls in town for the various conventions first but I didn't think this was the time to bring that up.

"She looks like somebody's kid sister, I know, but I can tell you personal, she can do it all in a major way. She's like a business machine, one accurate, perfect repeat performance after the other, no questions asked. There's ten percent in it for you, up front, if you agree to promote and a little extra on the side whenever you want, free of charge, if you know what I mean?"

I didn't think he was confusing me with a complicated explication of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason but I decided to look thoughtful for awhile just in case he thought I was ungrateful for his proposal of employment.

"So what do you think, kid? This is the opportunity of a lifetime, girls like her don't grow on trees."

I had to agree with him there. I'd seen a lot of trees and none of them ever had anything like that growing in them. Instead, I said, "Thanks, you know, I've been looking for an answer to my son's question of, 'What do you do for a living, Dad?' Now, I can say, proudly, 'Your dad's a practitioner of the World's Second Oldest Profession, he's a pimp.'"

"Don't think of it as pimping, think of it as facilitating."

"I didn't know The Columbia School of Business had opened up a new major in Euphemism and Procurement. Actually, no thank you, I prefer Real Estate Investment better. Women are too unstable a commodity, too much up and down you can't control."

"I could easily imagine you lying in an alleyway with two broken kneecaps, disfigured forever."

I figured I had already blown both of my tips already so why not go for broke, "And I could imagine you behind bars, very easily. Even better, my phone is closer than yours."

Nick/Rico and I shared a deep, soul searching, heartfelt stare that suggested, "I'll be back, with friends," on his part and "I could care less," on mine. It was the last page in this chapter of The Human Comedy, two grown men playing a bluffing game neither one of us could ever act on. All the options of actions suggested, Bad for Business and no matter how you sliced or diced it, that was the bottom line in life that mattered most.

## Anthony Alba

### static

psychic static  
blood soaked patch of grass,  
tire iron,  
nine blows to the head,  
forcing skull fragments into the brain.  
wet towels on the bathroom floor,  
dna mixed with sour semen.  
looking down on my body from above.  
dark mist enveloping my face  
the wind whips a checkered  
flannel shirt against an aluminum screen door  
a fly smells blood,  
and telepathically informs other  
flys to investigate.  
a charred lump of flesh,  
pushes through the earth,  
raised in a clinched fist.

day glo  
designer body body bag  
crushed cigarette butt

a condom filled with heroin  
bursts in the rectum of the junkie queen  
causing cardiac arrest and death  
broken finger nails

execution at close range  
he is a little brat

he is sam

a parasite feeding on a host

his

his brain hears only static

only static

## Ben La Rosa

“Do you see?” offered the visiting shrink, “your current behavior reflects paranoia and delusions of grandeur. You actually believe you’re this . . . this tyrant with absolute power, but Ben--Ben-- there is help . . . there is ho--”

“GUARDS! SEIZE HIM!”

as they did I snapped a photo  
of the shrink’s stunned face,  
diamonds of sweat in his beard.

“Escort this  
FOOL  
to the chopping block and  
remove him  
from the world.  
on your way back, report to the new cook  
and tell him I desire  
3 fried boys  
with a side order of  
babylegs. he may refer  
any and all  
questions  
regarding preparations  
to the old cook’s head  
on the poleaxe  
near the parking bay.”

for all his intellectual worth,  
that shrink put up one hell of a  
screaming struggle  
all the way out of the apartment.  
useless fuckers.

oh! yes! remind me to soon relocate the guards;  
I’m running out  
of closet space.

## Ben La Rosa

wasn't this an Eagles song?

I still can't believe she's here,  
lying next to me, asleep.

her sleep  
makes me alone again.

do I love her?

I'm afraid so.

I do the trick  
no one has ever seen,  
split my chest and pull out  
my heart. It births red to a sucking sound, as reluctant to leave the  
warm cave as a sucker is a kid's mouth.

not much blood to it,  
I turn it over  
in my sticky hands. Even in darkness  
I see all manner of bruises, nicks and scratches on it, the general  
unhealth  
of the thing always a shock, this beloved beat-up truck  
of a heart.  
here's where a cigarette burned it and this side's flattened from  
being  
dropped and--  
what's this? a hole. smooth as if bored or eaten  
rather than  
shot clean through.

I push a finger up through  
the hole in my heart. the red pulsing muscle squeezes it. poor  
heart.

every year sees it a little smaller, yet heavier.

I look over at  
my one-night bride  
and the thing in my hands speeds up, heating like desert rock.

I'm lying. there's no woman here.

**melvin martin**

blood worm

i was grabbed quite forcibly by the back of my neck or  
sometimes by my throat or  
sometimes by my hair  
all of those times by

my father.

i was forced to bend over at the waist

“HOLD ON TO THAT DRESSER!!!”

and then the onslaught would begin  
sometimes with a heavy, leather belt  
sometimes with a large book  
sometimes with a wooden carving board  
but the worst object that my dad used to “spank” me with was an  
old-fashioned, brass curtain rod  
if the rod was used efficiently (with just the right amount of  
speed and strength) i would often enter the strange realm  
the exalted lair  
the dwelling place of

the blood worm.

in the seconds before the first swing of the brass curtain rod i  
would start to hyperventilate  
each breath a moment of eternal respite  
my heart on the verge of exploding  
my legs no longer attached to my eight  
or nine or ten or eleven or twelve-year old body  
i know now that certain types of horror are so absolute that they  
are beyond human description  
i know now that certain levels of physical pain can indeed generate  
mind-altered states of consciousness  
i know now why the blood worm came to me.

the first strike of the brass curtain rod caused my total universe  
to become WHITE-HOT and i was blinded  
my teeth and my eyes were so tightly closed that my whole, frail,  
asthmatic being consisted of nothing more than my teeth and my  
eyes.

the second strike of the brass curtain rod and CRUELTY was forever  
engraved upon my soul and i was re-born as an unwanted infant whose  
father was pain and whose mother was fear.

the third strike of the brass curtain rod and from the greatest  
depths of my spirit the scream would release itself and the blood  
worm would start to form within the totality of my mind's eye.

upon a screen of crimson fury the blood worm would present itself  
to me

redder than the reddest of all reds was the blood worm's  
slug-like body, writhing and screaming in agony,  
ten, fifty, a hundred yards in length?  
there was a thick, black slit that ran from the bottom of its  
tail to the base of its head  
and attached to the outer portions of the slit were thousands  
of tiny arms  
each arm tipped with a lobster-like claw  
and all of the arms were flailing about madly and i could hear  
the miniature claws making barely audible clicking sounds  
a multitude of poisonous castanets  
the blood worm's head was no more than one, gigantic eye that  
stared directly into my throbbing soul and as the eye grew  
larger in size i could see a complex network of veins that  
were actually rivers of blood flowing in all directions upon  
a vast, wet and fleshy terrain  
the blood worm's single eye was a hideously-designed  
magnification lens that was placed over the surface of some  
distant and ungodly planet  
another strike of the brass curtain rod and i was transported  
closer to the planet's surface where i was forced to observe  
what appeared to be the planet's dominant life-form - millions  
of giant, eyeless flying reptiles that were soaring gracefully  
over the rivers of blood in search of prey  
i was at ground-level and was able to witness an occasional  
flying creature glide past me with a screaming blood worm in  
its beak  
the sound was deafening, like a billion crows in flight  
hungry and angry  
when i began to hear the crows i would slowly descend into a  
pleasant and inviting blackness and i was no longer aware of  
any pain at all

and to this day, decades later, i often fall asleep to the relentless  
cawing of a vast flock of crows way, way off in the  
lonely, orange distance.



**daniel lama thorin ascap**

STARVE ARTIST. STARVE! copyright 1998

JESUS CHRIST WAS A HOMELESS MAN AND HE HAD MORE FRIENDS THAN ME  
THEY'D ALL BE EATING HUMUS AND DRINKING WINE ON THE BEACH AT GALILEE  
JESUS PUT AN AD IN THE PAPER IT COST LESS THAN A DIME  
THIS AD CAUGHT THE EYE OF A SHUTTERBUG AS HE WAS STANDING ON A SOUP LINE  
IT READ: "WANTED AN ARTIST TO PAINT A PICTURE OF A FAREWELL DINNER

ME AND MY CREW SEEK AN EXPERIENCED EYE NOT SOME FOOL BEGINNER"

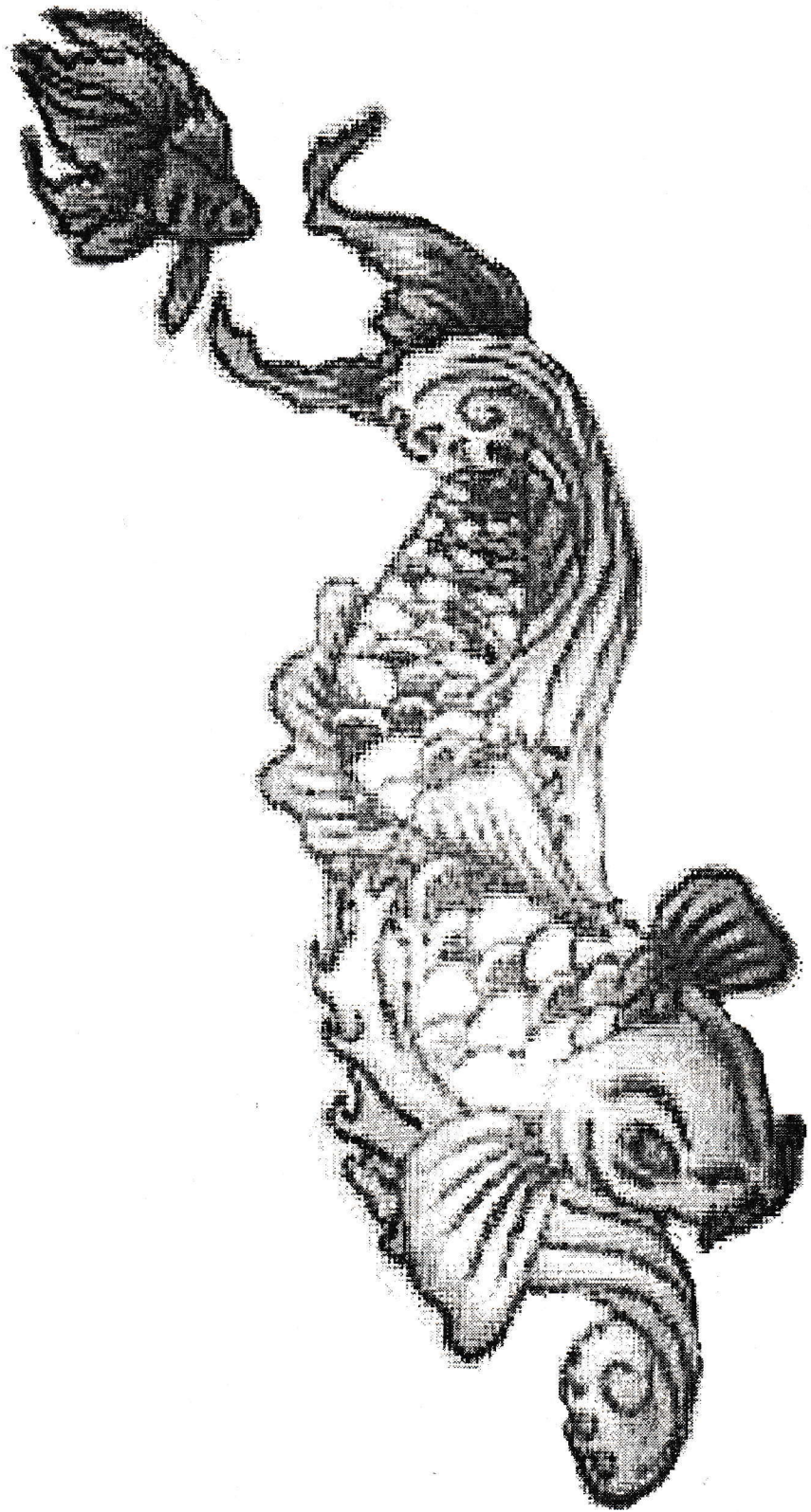
SO THIS ARTIST GATHERED HIS BRUSHES AND HEADED FOR GALILEE

UPON HIS ARRIVAL Mister christ informed the artist that he would HAVE TO  
WORK FOR FREE

CHORUS: STARVE ARTIST STARVE STARVE ARTIST STARVE YOU GOT AN EDUCATION YOU DRESS  
LIKE A SLOB  
STARVE ARTIST STARVE STARVE ARTIST STARVE YOU SHOULD COME TO YOUR  
SENSES AND GET A REAL JOB  
WHAT WILL YOUR LOVERS AND NEIGHBORS SAY? HEY HEY HEY

VINCENT VAN GOGH CUT OFF HIS OWN EAR IN A SELF DESTRUCTIVE PSYCHOTIC FIT  
HE WOULD BUY EXTRA BRUSHES AND PAINT WITH THE MONEY HE WOULD SAVE ON Q TIPS  
VINNIE DIDN'T MAKE A PROFIT WHILE HE WAS ALIVE AND WARHOL NEVER SANG FOR HIS SUPPER  
MICHELANGELO ATE HIS BAGELS PLAIN 'CAUSE HE COULDN'T AFFORD ANY BUTTER  
PICASSO STIFFED A CABIEE IN PRIPAIRRE' THEN TOLD THE COPS HIS NAME WAS MATISSE  
PEOPLE ARE STARVING IN CHINA ARTISTS ARE DROPPING LIKE FLIES REST IN PEACE  
A HOMELESS LADY STOPPED AN ARTIST IN SOHO AND ASKED "CAN YOU SPARE A DIME BROTHER?"  
THE ARTIST ASKED IF THIS IS A TRICK QUESTION LIKE WHO WAS WHISTLER'S MOTHER?

CHORUS-----



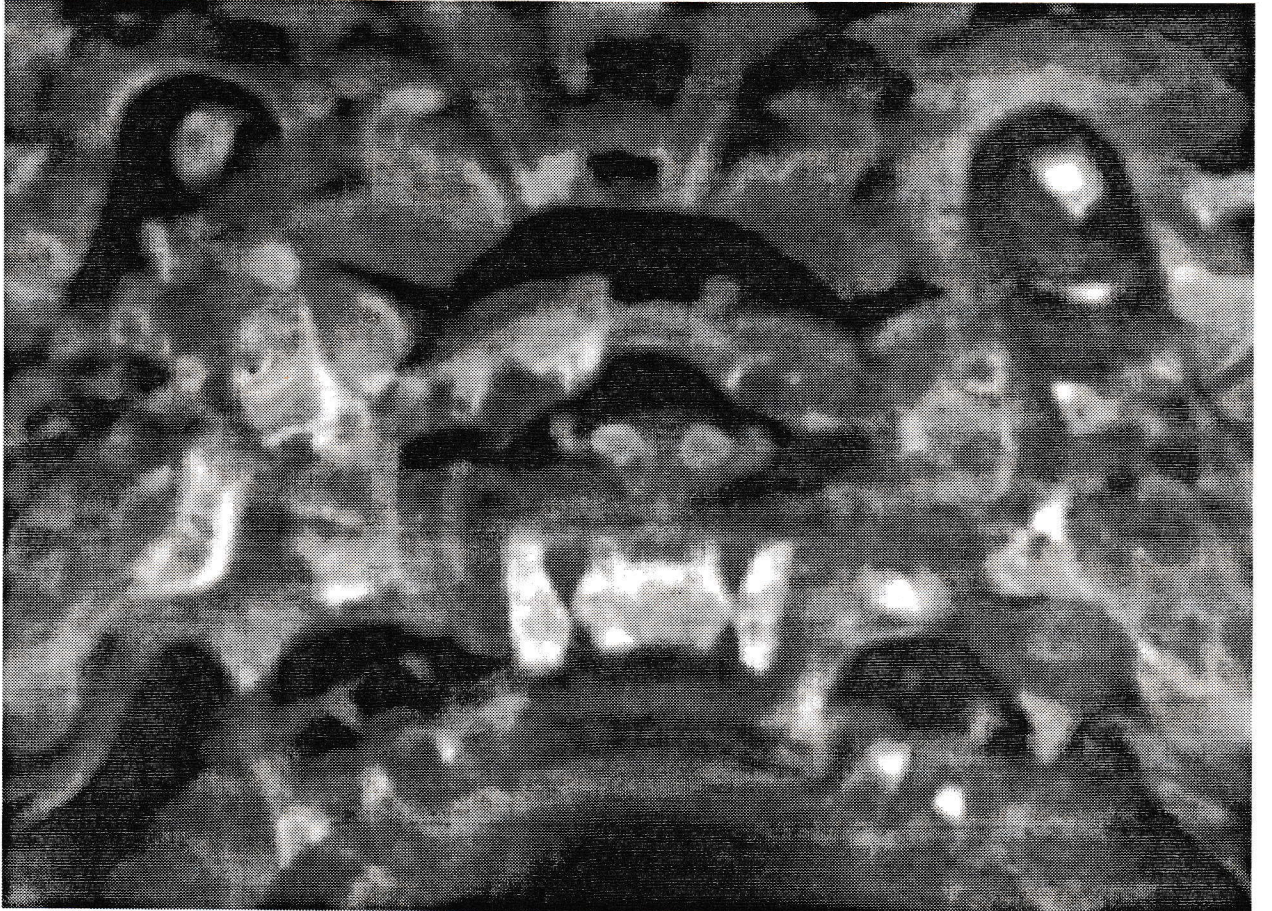
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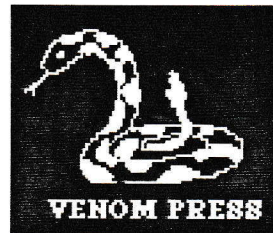
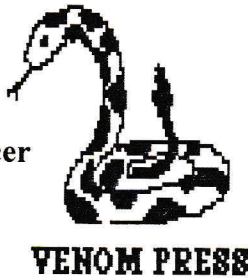
*Featured Artist Joanne Pagano: Back Cover Drawing - CAT,  
 Centerfold Drawings: Family Reunion, Dollmaker, Dollmaker, OGZ,  
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**Joanne Pagano \* Gallery Exhibition Opening \* Saturday, October 17, 1998  
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Gargoyle II - Photograph by J. D. Rage

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