



# CURARE

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# C U R R A R E

## **Rage-o-rama - a column for the no future**

Sometimes Life can get sooo sad you just want to go out of your house wearing an NYPD cap hoping that some crazy cop killers will shoot you in the head and just in case they miss, you also sport a jacket with Missing Foundation upside-down martini glasses on it to cover all possible bases. I wore both those items today, but I know I'm not ever going to get off that easy. I did lots of great stuff this summer, like visiting Ernest Hemingway's grave in Ketchem, Idaho. I was not surprised after visiting Ketchem that Hemingstein shot himself. I wouldn't make it a week in that town. I ate in a cool Chinese restaurant there, and was pointed at and laughed at by a table of drunken aging yuppies who had spent too much time in the bar at the golf course. The ladies slurred about where could they get tattoos like that and similar grotesquenesses. I calmly stopped eating my chow mein and returned their rude stares until they got too embarrassed to keep it up. If they had continued, I would have done the first tattoo ever using chopsticks as a tattoo needle after announcing "I know where you can get one, you sweet fluttry drunken asshole," to the other restaurant clientele. The waiter came from Alaska, so that might be a commentary on the young people of Ketchem. I was ready to shoot myself and go sleep next to Ernest, who had a neat marble stone, but I was lucky enough to be able to leave town in order to drive on a dark country road for an hour and a half to get to a campground where I had to pitch my tent on a black dusty lava bed. I also visited Willa Cather's house in Red Cloud, Nebraska, Hemingway's childhood home in Oak Park, Illinois, Emily Dickinson's home in Amherst, Massachusetts and Nathaniel Hawthorne's house in Salem. I have doubts about whether I will ever become famous after visiting these homes because I don't think they will ever consider making a memorial out of a first floor railroad apartment on East 5th Street in Manhattan. Emily had it made, this recluse game is something I will definitely be looking into. I drove 800 miles in one day, went 24 hours without eating twice and had to sleep in a car after spending the night in a gambling casino playing poker machines in a place called Slots Down Under. I had a good time. I drank coffee at a campsite where bugs kamikaze dived into my blue plastic camping cup before I could get it to my lips. I had another near death experience and sprained both hands keeping my rental car from rolling down a ravine. I watched a woman brush her teeth at one camp bathroom for 20 minutes. Next time I came in she was still there brushing away. Probably drove 800 miles in one day without food. There are some weird people out there in Amerika, but I liked them, and I liked it. I particularly liked playing My Life With The Thrill Kill Kult on my portable CD Player and Piss Factory on the rented 1994 flaming Red Mazda's tape player. I even developed a renewed interest in Bach and all those Classical types. Something about symphony orchestras on long deserted plains highways. I was On The Road. It was amazing. I wanted to keep going forever.

Back at the tenement. Curare #2 was a great magazine. The cover drew a lot of attention. It was even implied that the syringe might not have been photographed on the Williamsburg Bridge. Since then, I have seen syringes galore all over the fucking place. Get wise is all I have to say, or you'll wind up like someone I know, who uses them six times a day because they have drug/alcohol abuse accelerated diabetes. Remember, you just might live and you just might decide you want to live. It could be a problem. Get out while you still have some teeth.

One thing I have definitely learned during my horror story of a life is that you just can't give a damn about what anybody else thinks. You gotta admit that you like what you like and hate what you hate. You are the cool, the cool is you. Peer pressure is bull, because nobody else takes the heat for being you but yourself. Enough invaluable free advice. I bet everyone is wondering what my favorite band Piss Factory is doing other than playing on Mazda car tape decks across the nation. I wish I knew. Hopefully they will issue a new CD soon and we will all be the better for it. And don't you think BeBe Bullet is one of the most fabulous artists in town? This issue of Curare features nine of her drawings, sorry, we just couldn't fit any more. I guarantee you will not find anything else like these incredible creations in your lifetime.

Since we have an ISSN number and feel very official, we may begin accepting orders for subscriptions. Inquire at your earliest convenience. Well, gotta go now. I have a sudden urge to drive across the Mississippi River and mail a postcard. Enjoy Curare. Poison sometimes makes a lot of sense.

Luv, J.D. -- Fall '94

## Poison Pen

by JAN SCHMIDT

Last year I finally did it. I took classes at a new exercise place on Avenue A. This was my first concentrated foray into the world of physical health. A couple times when I lived in California I ran with some friends on a track. It was so boring going around in circles that I speeded up and passed everyone to get it over with. The regular runners were pissed that I, who never did a lick of exercise, would simply run farther, faster. Once in New York I took a couple of exercise classes from a friend. I was always high then, so it didn't really take with me.

But this time I loved it. You get all this stuff called oxygen and you don't breathe hard climbing up to your fourth floor apartment. I still wasn't in good shape but after a year of going one, two, and on the odd occasion, three times a week, I was working up to it.

Then, just when they really had me hooked, the place closed. I was irritable, shaking, feeling sick all over; I had withdrawals. I told my friend Katherine Arnoldi. She said, "I've got the answer, come with me to Lezly Dance and Skate School on Broadway. They have African Dance and Afro-Caribbean Dance."

I nixed that right away. I thought dance class was for sissies, even though I knew from other dancer friends that dancers are actually the most obsessive/compulsive sadists of any type of artist. One day I ended up meeting Arnoldi there. I went up to the fourth floor in a slow airless elevator that holds five uncomfortably. I got out and found myself in this large room with wooden floors and windows at one end and eight drummers at the other end. In between were thirty or forty people, mostly women. More than half of them were white. I thought they looked ridiculous doing African dance. She would never get me to take class there.

However. One more month went by in which I didn't have any place to exercise and I was bordering on a breakdown. In an insane moment, crawling on all fours, foaming at the mouth, I called Arnoldi. "Take me," I said, "I'm yours."

We popped by on a Saturday afternoon when the Master Elder of Afro-Haitian Dance, Jean Leon Destiné, was teaching one of his four-week seminar classes. We hid in the back row while the drummers were fixing the beat. Destiné came out. He must be seventy years old, he looked fifty, and danced like a thirty year old.

When the drums picked up speed, we did a warm-up. Destiné couldn't speak over the drums so it was entirely done by imitating him to the best of our ability. Since the room was so crowded, I needed one of the other dancers to watch because I couldn't see Destiné all the time. I noticed a white woman to my right three rows up. She seemed to have it. She had her feet hopping, her arms waving, and her spine rippling like the ocean. I tried to repeat what she did. I stumbled trying to make everything move at once. Arnoldi whispered to me to pay attention to the feet. I eased up and just tried to do the steps. I found that I could do some of them from old rock and roll days. When I was a kid, adults, with horror and disgust, called that stuff "jungle dancing." I thought they were stupid old people who were racist and, worse, couldn't dance. Now I realized they were right. Wow, I thought, this is really great.

After forty-five minutes of this warm-up, Destiné stopped and we sat in a circle and he told us about Afro-Caribbean dance. Each island has a slightly different religion: Haiti has Voodoo, Puerto Rico and Cuba have Santeria. He talked about the different African Gods and how the steps relate to them. When we stood up again, I thought the class was over. Arnoldi smiled her enigmatic, dancer-sadistic smile, when I asked her. She said, "Oh no. There's lots more."

Next Destiné motioned a rhythm with his arms and the drummers began to pound out this new beat. When they were drumming to his satisfaction, he started teaching combinations. With intense concentration I managed to perform a couple steps. Then the footwork got more complicated and I tripped all over myself. Finally, he put all of the parts we'd learned together. I would have been totally lost except for the black woman I was urgently watching. In the midst of this profound attention, I suddenly realized that the dancing was beautiful. It was inconceivable that I had thought it was ridiculous. And I was covered in sweat from head to foot.

While one half of the class did the combination I leaned on the barre and thought, I can't move anymore. But when it was our side's turn to do the set, the drums made my feet move. I looked at the drummers more closely. I recognized a friend, Nadier. His tall, thin self was pounding away with an ecstatic smile on his long, usually serious, face. For a moment, I had a sense of community and a real desire to dance into a trance.

When that section was over, I thought we were finished. I asked Arnoldi, who again smiled charmingly, viciously, and said, "Oh, no. Not yet."

We all trailed over to the long end of the room and followed three by three the length of the studio, performing the steps of different gods, after Destin . The drummers propelled us wildly across the floor. I didn't even try to do the steps, just make it to the other side, without looking as totally stupid as I felt.

Towards the actual end of the class, some two hours from beginning, I went to the bathroom. When I came back I stood next to the drummers and saw the lines of dancers shimmying and grinding up to them. Many of the dancers wore bright colors, holding their skirts up, shaking them. It was breathtaking. Everyone looked beautiful - even the ones who were not very good had a look of transcendent concentration that made them glow.

And everyone's roots began to show. Doing the same step, the black people looked African the way their bodies formed the movements. I never felt so much like an Irish clogger as when I did the African steps. Other people's training showed, hopping in a balletic manner to the Caribbean beat.

Then I saw Arnoldi. I've read her terse and elegant prose, I never saw her dance before. She came up the line of dancers, eyes shining, long slim arms and torso glistening with sweat, circling in fluttery waves. It was the step of Agwe, the god of water, but it looked to me like a bird step. Arnoldi floated as delicate and graceful as a crane. I was full of unparalleled affection, bordering on passion - passion for life.

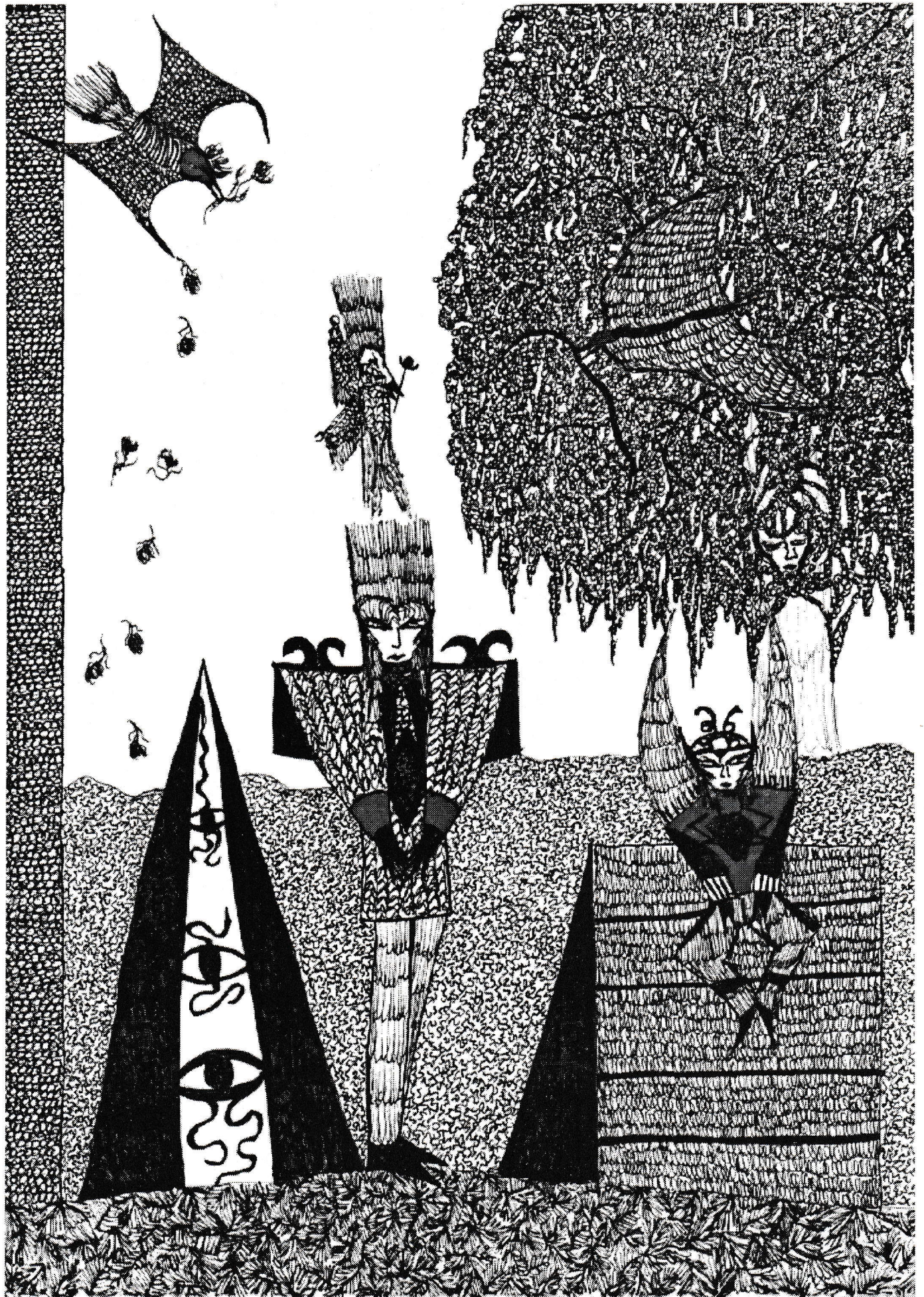
I was hooked. This was better than any drug. AND: whadda ya think, a nice Irish midwestern girl gets a little flava?

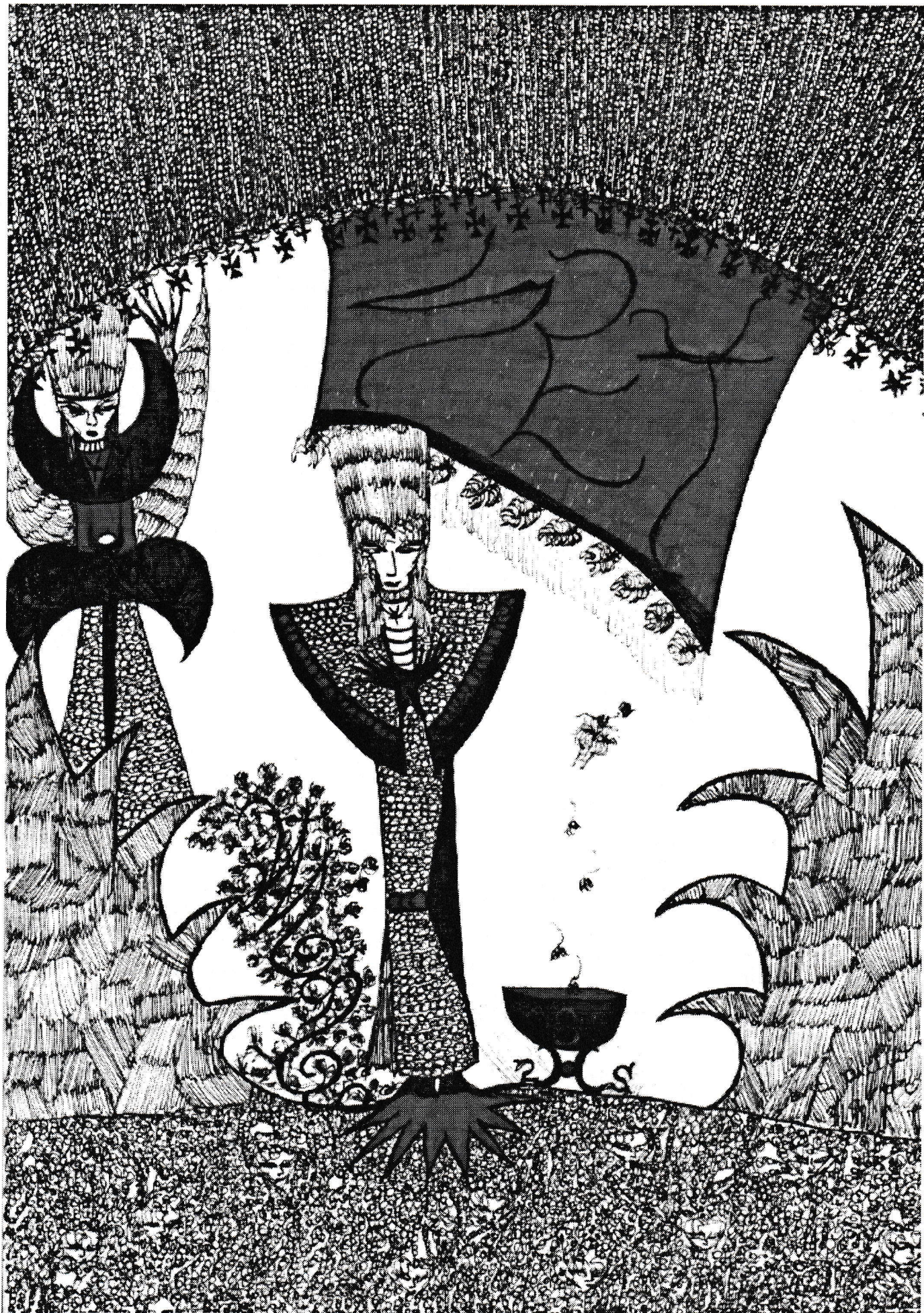
Sometimes the world is a wondrous place.

- which is why it makes it all the more sad to have to add this note. In this world where such incredible dances exist, there is also starvation, mayhem and murder. Two of these Caribbean islands, Cuba and Haiti are in the midst of unbelievable horror. Haiti is trying to survive through a military dictatorship with intense human rights violations and Cuba is the victim of an insane embargo led by the USA. It is, as Susan Sherman tells me, the first such embargo in history where food and medicine are not allowed through and so the people of Cuba are now starving to death. The United States of America has perpetrated a lot of evil on this part of the world: Nicaragua, Chile, El Salvador and certainly Cuba. Our biggest business is weapons. What does that say **about** us?

Lesson Number 4367: Poison Pen Writing Advice:

About the time I wrote this piece, I took it to my peer workshop of about five people. About one or two of them commented about my first draft that I used the word "about" too many times, about fifty. Arnoldi said that the only proper use of the word is in the phrase, "to jump and dance about." It's about time.





## Susan Sherman

### HERE'S A POEM

to the poets who die unknown  
who live their poems day by day  
bare the chaos of lost words  
Here's to the poems that never get published  
that lie fallow in someone's veins  
that burned in Hiroshima and Nagasaki Vietnam  
New York City Portland, Maine  
Here's to the poets in Nicaragua  
Cuba South Africa El Salvador  
in the southern countryside of all the Americas  
and the northern cities too  
Here's to the women and men  
who never even knew they were poets  
had no one to tell them  
didn't know how to tell themselves  
Here's to the millions of words buried in a  
million places all over the globe  
the mouths and hands silenced forever  
Here's to all that magic music beauty  
surprise that died unsung that dies everyday  
that blood that moves us forward  
that holds back the tide



## Susan Sherman

### FOR THE HOMELESS WOMAN ON 7TH & A

Drink plenty of fluids she yelled after me  
as I turned to leave having deposited a dollar  
in her withered hand She was no stranger  
often alone her dog missing today  
hiding perhaps or on loan to a friend  
I took her advice as gospel somehow she seemed to know  
and so I sit this evening and drink and drink  
and drink saying to myself over and again  
I do believe somewhere hidden in some secret  
place I do believe in some room somewhere  
nowhere to be seen

### PRAYER

All those songs words blood All those crowds  
clapping in unison All those feet beating together  
united for once past individual expediency  
lost in the larger moment All those sounds  
wrenched from the guts of ordinary people  
brought to extraordinary acts Past the rhetoric  
slogans the barriers of textbook theory  
pedantic explanations Lost in the rumba congo  
rhythms of the countryside the barrios the cities  
west and east north and south Ferocious  
gathering everything into breath inhaling us all into  
the future past the bullets iron crosses the disappeared  
How do you chant this song to people who have never  
heard it sung So much hope How do you say it cannot all  
be lost only waiting Beneath this shallow crust of words  
the music gathering to burst forth

## Susan Sherman

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The sky grey  
                  tops of trees swaying gently  
The mellow cadence of rain  
Even the lake in this downpour is still  
(at least from a distance)  
Like memories of the life  
I have left behind six hours by train

I wonder if it is raining there too  
On the outside quiet  
But unlike this silent habitat  
city noise only moves indoors  
The tension violence  
The need to act  
                                react

I can see here how memory takes over  
numbing things reducing them  
to their barest essentials  
The rhythm  
                                of words  
It is hard not to counterfeit  
make it all up  
Something to be read  
  as written

without momentum  
or fear  
I don't want to discuss things anymore  
analyze them away I belong to the city  
The dirt The despair  
The anger that sets motion into place

# SPECIAL DIET MENU

- D 1. Steamed Mixed Vegetables..... 5.45
- D 2. Steamed Snow Peas and Broccoli..... 5.45
- D 3. Steamed Snow Peas & Waterchestnuts.... 5.45
- D 4. Bean Curd & Mixed Vegetables ..... 6.15
- D 5. Steamed Chicken & Snow Peas..... 6.45
- D 6. Steamed Chicken & Mixed Vegetables... 6.45
- D 7. Steamed Shrimp & Mixed Vegetables..... 7.95
- D 8. Steamed Shrimp & Bean Curd..... 7.95
- D 9. Steamed Shrimp & Snow Peas..... 7.95
- D 10. Steamed Scallops W/ Mixed Vegetables... 7.95
- D 11. Steamed Mixed Seafood..... 9.95

Cumm streams filled with PARAHNA  
Swimming through the uterus of  
Imagination filling me with the  
INSPIRATION to bury the spawn of  
love !

## Stephen Fried

### One in a Thousand

A dead spot in tour 3, the four-to-twelve shift: two ambulances, the security van and a maintenance truck sit empty in the emergency parking area next to the ambulance bays. The conversation has had four at bat, each story after the first told to top the preceding one, yet each essentially the same account of some bachelor party. This is a tradition everybody seems to regard as universal, held in one of the island's three topless clubs and culminating invariably in violence, unconsciousness, violent unconsciousness. I've never been to one, so when their looks tell me I'm up, I take a plunge.

"Let me get this straight," I say, "you mean to tell me that every bride, every presumably virgin bride on this island, on her wedding night, is taking in a dick that within the past 24 hours has been in -- has cum in -- has shared a whore's mouth with two dozen and up, maybe up to fifty, other dicks. Is that right?"

There's a short collective hiss. They shake their heads at each other, pointedly leaving me out.

"Yeah, well, you want to look at it like that," one of the medics snarls.

"Jesus, at least give the guy credit for taking a shower," puts in the security guard.

"Yeah, and not with a raincoat on," says my partner.

Everybody laughs. The conversation turns to how it isn't really the same since AIDS. The fellatrices -- who, it's emphasized are not real pros, but just topless waitresses going for the top dollar -- now insist upon, and even supply, condoms all around.

"It's not," the other medic says, "even worth the extra twenty a head for the blow jobs any more.

"Well, you know," I say, trying to get back in the swing of it "there's that one man in a thousand who can suck his own dick.

Looks of distaste all around, above harrumphs of suspicion that it's a put-on.

"Yeah, just think," my partner tries out, "some guys are going on dates and then going home and getting themselves off."

"Yeah?" the first medic snorts. "Then where are these guys? I never met one. You?"

Heads shake all around.

"Maybe they don't go on dates," speculates the security guard. "Maybe you don't even see 'em, 'cause they never leave the house.

The hospital carpenter has a frown on.

"I don't know," he says, serious. "I think that'd make you, you know, sort of... homosexual."

"Look," I say, glad my topic hasn't fallen flat as usual, "does giving yourself a hand job make you gay?"

They don't like that last word, look at me like, now we know what you do.

"Yeah, well you don't get your cum in your mouth when you jack off," the second medic explains patiently to me.

"I have, once or twice," my partner admits, "just when it hit there. It's salty, kind of like blood."

"Well, the point is you don't have to. I mean, I cut my finger, I might put it in my mouth, but I don't make it a point to eat my blood... or sperm either."

"Yeah, you could wear a rubber," the first medic says, and laughs.

"Come on, man, would you put your shit in your mouth?"

"Would a woman -- eat your shit?"

"Yeah, well, plenty do."

"That's true love."

"I heard about this EDP," the first medic breaks in, "fucker went to town on himself: gave himself a local, cut off his fucking arm and ate it. He was a tech, too."

He looks narrowly at me and my partner.

"Right, and then he bit off his own dick," the security guard says with a wild giggle.

"That's true love," the first medic affirms.

Two women walk by. The group falls silent. Hands go in pockets. After they've passed, the carpenter says: "Get a look at those!"

The security guard puts two clawed hands before him at chest level.

"I'd like to get a look at hers!"

"The one on the left."

"Naw, too skinny. The one on the right. Got better handgrips."

In the land of the overfed buttock, the well-proportioned are inadequate.

The radio gives the medics a job. The group breaks up.

"You know," my partner says as we walk away, "you hear a lot of reasons nobody wants to ride with a woman: they're no good if it gets rough, they can't lift, even that they attract trouble. But that's not it. The real reason is, you want to be able to say 'fuckin' shit.' You want to be able to raise up and cut a good fart once in a while. You want to be able to say something, when something walks by. It's those little things; they make the job so you can stand it."

"I can't stand it anyway," I tell him.

"That makes two of us," he says, and then, with a gesture that takes in the whole ambulance bay and the hospital it feeds: "two at least."



Photo by J.D. Rage

## Sid Branch

Sid re-CREATES the SCENE with MARTHA BLACK

And, the little one said "Roll over, roll over..."

Feeling as many emotions as a drugged person might have.  
I got all that is necessary to live and, I got the means to die.  
One day though I decided against death.  
I covet death as an artispiece - skulls that adorn my body.  
A notion, mere symbols of my thirst to love.  
A love so strong, the newspaper says, he killed. No trials yet.  
The jury can't reach a verdict on the impact of a single image.  
Television is only info process without clarity on & on & on.  
You want to be on too, don't you? Tell about the passion that left...  
If only we didn't fight ourselves and the pain that won't stop.  
I don't write new words - I'm not a poet anymore.  
Just keep talking about the brick and brown of life.  
Drunk with heat I have wanted to - cacophony of thought.  
I look at people and see only pain and problems.  
My neighbor lunges out and back with more coffee.  
"I can't stop writing," he says, "I'm really writing a lot."  
That's good I mutter. I want to run yet, I know there is no place...  
X's on this generation of lustful and abandoned souls.  
Sign your name or die anonymously. Don't lie anymore.  
Like I lie awake at night and dream fishes and clouds.  
Somehow my mother is aware and refuses to die - unforgiven.  
Cool people who speak the old language. Same spiritual well?  
And those of us who live will see our children's children die.  
Recover the past then speed through the present with knowledge.  
I return to suicidal tasks and understanding. Again and again.  
Time management. Yes, we know that's a white lie.  
Sick people with PhD's and Masters who cannot stay.  
I am grateful for mistiming; for my son who endures.  
At Saratoga the winner, by a neck, is Holy Bull.

## David Huberman

### SURFIN' U. S. A.

Ride the big wave  
Ride the big curl  
Cowabunga! Cowabunga!  
Ancient surfing words  
That wave is awesome  
That wave is The Last Wave  
the aborigines in Australia believe  
that a giant wave will swallow the  
Earth whole  
calling Noah  
calling Noah and the Ark!  
Falling off a watercliff  
Wipe Out!  
get mowed  
get stuffed  
take gas  
eating it  
Capt. James Cook here  
explorer  
Holy Hawaii, TV show-time  
Hawaiian Eye  
Hawaii Five-0  
Miami Vice  
77 Sunset Strip  
Marilyn Monroe  
Niagara Falls  
take off your clothes  
totally shed, dude  
25-foot breaker comin' at ya  
Krakatoa, East of Java  
Godzilla, Godzilla  
Ride that wave  
Mighty Joe Young just couldn't swim  
Waikiki Beach  
Redondo Beach  
Hit the beach  
Blood Beach  
On The Beach  
Mark Twain couldn't surf  
George Freeth was the first surfer  
Charlie Don't Surf and ya know he should  
Let's go to Malibu  
Let's look for Gidget  
Let's look for Brian Wilson  
Let's look for Jan and Dean  
Hey, I hear there's two girls for every boy

Hey, Moondoggie!  
Gidget Goes Hawaiian  
Gidget does it Greek-style  
Gidget will tell you  
How To Stuff A Wild Bikini  
Let's have a Surfin' Safari  
Invite Elvis, Tommy Sands, Sandra Dee,  
Annette & Frankie, the Pendletones, the Surf Punks,  
the Butthole Surfers  
Let's start a Surf City  
Calling Terry, the Great Kahuna  
Calling the Meat Puppets  
Calling the Beach Boys  
Calling that Little Old Lady From Pasadena  
Calling Mickey (Da Cat) Dora  
Calling Jayne Mansfield  
Wait a minute  
Wait a minute  
Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water  
Holy Jaws!  
all shriveled up and bloated  
Holy Moby Dick!  
there's a sign in Jaws' huge mouth  
that says  
Don't go near the water  
there's too many scumbags  
and syringes  
Hey, where did you get your  
wet suit -- Macy's?



Photo by J.D. Rage



## **Maria Olds**

### **Dreams**

Dreams are mirrors to your soul.

Dreams are a step to your past.

Hot fresh apple pie.

Children laughing, Daddy playing  
the piano.

Mommy on her knees on the kitchen floor  
playing jacks and singing songs

"There was a Dog, They called him  
Bingo. B. I. N. G. O, B. I. N. G. O, B. I. N. G. O,  
Bingo was his name (OH)

Sweet smells through the house.

Warm summer breeze,

Dreams are mirrors to your soul.

Dreams are a step to your past.

**Not my PAST !!!**

**Maybe Yours ???**

Dean Snyder

Two Excerpts from 11 DAYS ON THE PSYCH WARD

## STATE HOSPITAL

i think of LESLIE  
(one of my earliest and favorite "clients")

REALITY  
becomes the prime motivation.

LESLIE  
a little girl  
getting about  
not on feet, but by butt

SCOOTING'  
"Why walk?"  
my "Why work?"  
mirror to her mind-set

No one took the time  
or wanted to  
due to her worst trait  
CONSTANT GREEN DIARRHEA

(a good name for a band)  
but not for a RESIDENT  
although all together appropriate  
living like excrement waiting A-BOWL

the only difference  
in all residential institutions  
is how clean the toilet bowl existence  
and how often it is flushed

TOTALLY DEPENDENT on others  
any autonomy is pounded out  
by this the cruelest element  
another day of institutionalization

Perhaps that is why  
i  
IN - THIS, - TOO -  
SHUN - ALL  
feeling no reason  
to capitalize

**MONSTER MOVIE**

**AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH  
SCREAMS THE MONSTER  
HIMSELF  
HIS OWN VICTIM**

**HALVED & HUNCHED  
HOWLING  
THE PAIN  
BACK**

**despite SEARCHING FOR THE FORMULA  
THIS MEANEST OF MR. HIDES. ME  
MY OWN SELF KEPT FROM SIGHT  
NOW NOT SEEN, BY A JECKLESS I**

**I AWAKE  
ALREADY DRESSED  
IN FRANKENSTEIN BODY  
IMPOSSIBLY CLOTHED  
AGONY MANY TIMES TOO LARGE TO SUIT  
FEET FEELING LIKE CLOTHED CONCRETE  
TWO BOOTS**

**I TRY TO KILL THE MAD DOCTOR OF MY OWN CREATION  
BUT EVEN IF POSSIBLE  
ME STILL MACHINED BY HIM**

**HOW TO RESOLVE THIS GHOULISH QUESTION  
WHEN IS THIS HIDEOUS BEAST, ME  
TOO TORTURED KNOWING NEEDING "INDIVIDUATION".  
YET CARING AN ANTHOLOGY WRITTEN BY OTHERS**

**IT IS TIME  
CREATION  
CONFRONT  
CREATOR**

**EITHER WAY  
BLASPHEMY  
FOR WHO HAS THE RIGHT  
TO END WHAT IT DIDN'T START**

**IT HAD NOT MADE ITSELF  
IN GOD'S, OR ANYONE ELSE'S IMAGE  
AND YET THE MONSTER REMEMBERED THINKING AND FEELING  
A LIFETIME; WHICH SURELY IT HAD CREATED BY LIVING**

**THE MONSTER CONFRONTED IT'S ORIGINATOR  
NOT HAVING KNOWN BIRTH  
AND WHO'S HIDEOUS FORM  
HAD KEPT IT FROM A LIFE, IT'S OWN**

**THE MONSTER  
FACE TO FACE WITH IT'S MAKER  
HAD TO DISTINGUISH AUTONOMY FROM ARROGANCE  
FEELING IT'S DEATH, TOO IMPORTANT TO ENTRUST TO ANOTHER**

**Dean Snyder**

## Robin D'Cradle

### Anger comes my way

Whenever I feel mad/ Whenever I get anger/  
I turn to my cause/ To root out the solution/  
I take out my razor/ To carve out my will/  
I only hurt the one I hate/  
I won't allow anger/ I won't allow pain/ Focus on/ In w/ the  
physical/ Out w/ the mental/  
I only hurt the one I hate/  
Gonna shred it from the outside/ In/  
Whenever anger comes my way/ I wanna rip/  
Me/ I shred myself/  
I hate me/ I hurt myself/  
As a child after each fist in the face and smash of words  
that came my way, I would stumble into my room. Door closed  
and locked. I would go for my secret stash of double-edge  
razorblades. I would unwrap one carefully, and I'd proceed  
to slash. The soles of my feet. My arms, my thighs. And w/  
each gash my breathing that before was so hard and so  
erratic, would soften and regulate.  
I won't allow anger/ I won't allow pain/ Focus on/  
Whenever anger comes my way/ I wanna rip/

You only hurt . . . . .

## Vipin

### Creation Myths

In the beginning was chaos  
the undifferentiated, the void, primal ooze  
and then, things were named,  
the one who named them was also named-  
there was a second-degree naming ceremony,  
sandalwood paste on the forehead,  
swaddled in unstitched linen  
exposed to the wind and stars.

In the beginning was the endless,  
floating on the infinite ocean of milk,  
and on top of the coils of the endless bed  
was the one who was yet unnamed  
sucking on its own toes, a contented baby.

In the beginning was the word,  
and the word was just a grain  
nestled in the many-branched ovary of God.

In the beginning was the singularity,  
the place where all equations fail,  
or return an absurd result,  
the singularity was small,  
a measurelessly tiny thing  
that occupied all space before it exploded.

In the beginning was a pair of elephants coupling  
supported by two tortoises that hold up the world.

In the beginning were the four directions  
the winds, the four flags at the corner-posts  
of the world, fluttering pennants  
of black, red, yellow and white.

In the beginning was the elk-nation  
the horse-nation, the beaver-nation  
and the otter-nation.

In the beginning the sky was bent over,  
buggering the earth's chocolate brown  
and the earth begat many from its cloaca.

In the beginning Horus cried,  
his tears cut the channels of the river beds  
and formed the puddles of the seas.

In the beginning were three caravels  
crossing the Atlantic, bearing three flags.

In the beginning was the tar pit  
where struggling Mastodons, Brontosaurus,  
T. Rexes and Sabre Toothed tigers  
were held fast.

In the beginning was the root,  
some strange flower shoots began to sprout there,  
they bore many-hued tongue petals  
that spoke in an understated babble.

In the beginning was the crystal pyramid,  
filled with stones, stinking a little of decay.

In the beginning was the woman,  
one day she dripped the last runnels

of her menstrual blood on a pile of restless dust  
and fashioned a penis from the pasty dough;  
as an afterthought she added the body  
of a man to carry it about.

In the beginning was the man  
whose eyes were made of chalcedony,  
one day, walking along the rivers edge  
picking plover eggs, he encountered  
a woman who had a jade flower between her thighs.

In the beginning was a mote  
floating in God's eye.

In the beginning was death  
to amuse itself with destruction,  
death fashioned men, beasts and birds;  
fishes, insects, bacteria and viruses;  
plants, trees, shrubs and ferns.



Photo by Tilda Descher

**Charlene Cambridge**

*THE ANSWER IS THAT YOU  
ARE BORN TO JOY  
MY PRECIOUS CHILD.  
YOU HAVE NOT FOUND PEACE  
THOSE BORN TO JOY  
WALK THE ROAD  
BETWEEN THE FREE SPIRIT  
AND THE LOST SOUL.  
IT IS NOT FOR YOU  
NOT HERE,  
NOT NOW.*

*I DESPAIR AT THE QUESTION.*

*DO YOU DESPAIR AT  
THE SEARCH?  
THE ANSWER, MY PRECIOUS CHILD,  
IS LIFE.*

*BUT WHAT OF THE QUESTION?*

*THE WHY OF IT IS IRRELEVANT  
THE WHEN OF IT LOST IN SHAME  
THE HOW OF IT IMPROBABLE  
AND THE WHO OF IT,  
WELL CHILD,  
YOU HAVE THE EYES  
OF ONE WHO WALKS A NARROW PATH  
AND YOU WILL NO DOUBT COME  
FACE TO FACE WITH  
THE WHO OF IT  
SOON ENOUGH.*

*MOTHER LOVE (5/9/94)  
C. CAMBRIDGE*



WHAT AM I WANTING TO SAY  
SOMETHING ABOUT WANTING  
SOMETHING ABOUT LONELINESS  
BUT POSSIBLY NONE OF THAT  
PERHAPS A VERSE OR TWO  
IN REFERENCE TO THOSE OF US  
WHO WITH ROOMS OF OUR OWN  
INCOMES OF OUR OWN  
DREAM IN GUILTY UNGUARDED  
MOMENTS OF CRAMPED SPACES  
AND SOCIALLY APPROVED BONDAGE  
AND MAYBE NONE OF THAT EITHER  
A PHRASE KEEPS CIRCLING  
CHANGING THE MOOD  
CRAMPING THE STYLE  
HOW I WOULD LOVE TO SHAKE IT  
TO BEND, FOLD, SPINDLE AND MUTILATE IT  
INTO SOMETHING OTHER  
LATELY I SEEM TO HAVE LOST  
MY TALENT FOR THE TURN OF PHRASE  
YET THERE IS SOMETHING THERE  
IN BETWEEN THE PAUSES FOR BREATH  
LURKING BEHIND THE PUNCTUATION  
STRUGGLING TO BRIDGE THE YAWNING GAP  
BETWEEN POETIC VISION AND COMMUNICATION  
OR PERHAPS THERE IS NOTHING THERE  
AND SHE WILL SAY  
"THAT IS NOT WHAT I MEANT AT ALL"

THE PEACH EATER OR HOMAGE TO ALFRED  
C. CAMBRIDGE (8/23/94)

THERE IS A RISK ONE TAKES  
EVEN IN THESE DAYS  
OF ANTISEPTIC PASSION.  
NEITHER LATEX NOR SARAN WRAP  
CAN PROTECT THE SENSITIVE HEART.  
WHERE IS THE SAFE INTERCOURSE  
BETWEEN SOULS ON THIS SORDID  
LITTLE PLANET? WE WORRY ABOUT  
THE LACK OF SENSATION IN THE BEDROOM  
WHILE WE PASS THE DEAD AND DYING ON  
STREET CORNERS, THE LIES STILL IN OUR  
EYES AS WE DENY EACH OTHER'S  
HUMANITY WITH HURRIED STRIDES  
AND BENT HEADS.

THIS TIME I DID NOT LIE.  
I DID NOT SCURRY TO THE  
SAFETY OF REMOTE CONTROL LIVING, AND I HAVE LIVED TO TELL THAT  
THERE ARE SOME THINGS FROM WHICH  
THERE IS NO PROTECTION.

C. CAMBRIDGE (4/1/94)

## Bruce Weber

### I FILL MY LUNGS WITH SMOKE AND EXHALE

for eak

i fill my lungs with smoke and exhale  
no gentle conversation  
no baby being born  
i fill my lungs with smoke and exhale  
animals caught in a rage of knives  
mucus caught in the throat  
i fill my lungs with smoke and exhale  
a barrio convinced of death  
a skyscraper bending to drink blood  
a lover's soft hand with a steaming gun  
i fill my lungs with smoke and exhale  
a bull ring and a stadium  
filled with flies the size of hawks  
crushed in the hands of the matador  
squeezed in the rush of crowds  
pulverized by the whooshing air  
unleashed by the industrial zombies  
counting dollars gathered  
from the mouth of poverty  
i fill my lungs with smoke and exhale  
the lost civilization of atlantis  
the extinct ecosphere of dinosaurs  
the parts of the rain forest  
exchanged for mansions and sex  
i fill my lungs with smoke and exhale  
all the abuse i've taken  
all the deaths of my generation  
all the power poured like acid on my skin  
all the fear people have thrown on me like confetti  
all the lies i've told to save myself from embarrassment  
all the times i've convinced myself i've done the right thing  
i fill my lungs with smoke and exhale  
because i can't breathe in this body anymore  
i wake up every night at 3 am and pray  
some air is gonna fill my chest  
and that in the morning i'm gonna rise up  
take the air that's mine  
and suck it in and hold it there  
but after falling back asleep  
i forget my promises  
and wake up in the morning  
and go on  
like a sleepwalker  
remembering in the back of my brain  
some wish i never kept  
because i'm weak and human  
i fill my lungs with smoke and exhale this poem  
because  
all poems are journeys  
looking for a blade between  
the shoulder and the heart

## will inman

### a visitation of maggots

1

he's not who he's seen to be  
he does not live in a world that allows being  
                                  seen through  
how much energy goes into maintaining his image  
it's surprising he projects such real presence  
is it because he believes the image he creates  
yes, he continues to create that image  
is it the process of creating that yields him  
                                  presence

2

some of us live in our wounds, we celebrate our  
hurts, take pride in our polyps, they become  
our reason for being: should we somehow find healing,  
what excuses would we have to live by?

some of us are fortunate enough to be visited  
                                  by maggots  
maggots devour the image we want to be seen by  
they devour the wounds by which we justify ourselves  
they chew in fine pieces all our excuses for refusing  
                                  to be real  
they eat our gangrene -- everything that's dead  
                                  about us  
sometimes very little is left after a maggot feast

3

we can re-create the image, or we can restore real self  
around what remains after maggots visit, but can we  
spit the taste of maggots out of our mouths

i will no longer ask anyone to show me how  
i'll wait no longer for someone else to start  
now i'm old enough to reinvent genesis  
now i'm old enough to redesign god  
now i'm old enough to realign myself with stars  
now i'm old enough to cut the bullshit, to be  
who i really am  
now i'm old enough to die and not be sorry  
does that set me free to be really alive

## **Maria Ayala**

### **INDIAN MEMORIES**

I remember -- when I was but a mere child and used to ponder on what life would be like, when I would be a man. But most of all how I would perceive the world once this realization had taken place.

I remember -- what it was like when I was very young. How I used to run my bare feet through the sand and concentrate my thoughts on the blue sea.

As I grew older, I remember watching my people dying one by one all around me, yet there was nothing I could do to prevent this horrible act, which at the time, I could not comprehend.

I remember -- when Lewis and Clark, the first two white explorers I ever laid eyes upon, landed at our shores. They brought with them a new way of life, one unknown to me and my people.

I remember -- watching my younger brothers and sisters weeping and dying, because they had no food with which to warm their little tender bodies. My younger brothers and sisters who would have grown to be great Indian warriors. The future leaders of my people. But the white man looked upon my people and I as a threat, which he feared, because someday we would rise and take back what was rightfully ours.

Once the white man had taken away the land of my people, he placed us, at least the few survivors that were left compared to the many who had been killed, on what we came to know as reservations; where my people and I would no longer be able to walk upon the sacred land, which we had come to know as our own, as freely as once we had. He had taken our land, in order to open the west and build railroads, which were used to transport people from one part of the country to the other. Strangers who would settle upon land which was once ours.

I also remember watching how deeply involved my father would get while reciting the Indian prayers. It was he and the prayers, which kept me going. For there were times, when I felt like taking the coward's way out. It was just too much for me to bear.

Still and all I found the strength within me to go on and was able to overcome the burdens which the white man had placed upon me. In many ways the future looks dim, but someday my people and I shall come back and claim what once was ours.

Yes, all these things do I remember, but now I am no longer a child, now I am a man.

## OH TECUMSEH, GREAT SHAWNEE INDIAN CHIEF

Oh Tecumseh, Great Shawnee Indian Chief, what went wrong among your people:

Why did the American hate you so?

The American hated you, because you were different; you were not white. You were judged by the color of your skin, not by what you had to offer as a beautiful human being.

Oh Tecumseh, Great Shawnee Indian Chief, you who were part of a peaceful people, you who worshipped and loved the land.

You who saw the British as your equal, as on that most memorable event, the War of 1812, when you sided with the British Generals against the Americans, in order that you might defend that which was rightfully yours, your most precious land.

Oh Tecumseh, Great Shawnee Indian Chief, you who meant the American no harm, and how did he repay you?

By forcing you into warfare and destroying your precious belongings.

On that painful day, when you returned from your recruiting trip to the southern tribes, (the Chippewa, Ottawa and Potawatomi under the leadership of Black Jacket), only to find that while you had been gone your brother Tenakwatawa had given the order, under which your warriors had attacked the American troops at Tippecanoe. Land which is known today as Lafayette, Indiana.

As a result, you returned to Prophet Town, which was once your home, only to find ashes and dreariness where there had once been stores, ammunitions, firearms and horses.

Oh Tecumseh, Great Shawnee Indian Chief, you who passed through so many ordeals.

Your people have all perished and what once was yours is no longer. What has become of you, Oh Great Indian Chief?

I know what has become of you Oh Tecumseh, Great Shawnee Indian Chief. You have left my world and have entered that wonderful kingdom up in the sky where once again you will be an Indian Chief, where once again you will be the leader of all your people.

Maria Ayala

## **Jan McLaughlin**

### **TRANSIT POEM #6**

have a nice life,  
i said to the man  
who liked making friends on the train.  
have a nice life  
and a quick death  
when it comes.  
we talked non-stop for hours  
as he chain smoked,  
hurtling through the afternoon  
from cornwall to brooklyn.

### **MADWIFE**

she placed her wedding ring  
upon the altar  
deciding it was not the time to pray.  
instead, her fingers joined  
to form a circle  
through which  
ironing and meatloaf loomed  
and children sat  
on the back porch crying.  
the heart grows bigger as it dies.

### **BUS STOP**

at maple and 125th  
a girl still waits for a bus.  
a boy still sits on the sidewalk,  
brooding. if they turned their heads  
they could see each other,  
but they don't.

## Larry Jones

### cat on a hot asphalt tarbeach

for merrill cole  
- there's life in that girl!  
(big daddy)

this pussypoet proudly presents  
"cat on a hot asphalt tarbeach"  
starring montevideo clift  
as elizabeth taylor-mead  
and all that warhol seed

and don't rule out the  
possibility of a truly post-  
castrato "mr. boggs/mr. bib"  
something like hysterical  
salad dressing insemination

yes all my pussies (and then  
some) all my top "pop"  
performances latest/greatest  
degenerations into such  
totally unwanton pregnancies

yes remember "pig daddy" cole  
and ole s(nat)ch "king" creole  
oh "bbq" sole slaw sister me-ow  
some more trailertrash to go  
some tomcat you would know

Cafe Nico, 7/21/93

### bolivia

vicente says bolivia's  
such a typical woman  
lives only for travis  
her man

- oh no! i disdain  
she's a life  
a room  
with a view

of her own  
where she can go  
when she needs  
vants

to be

alone

while he's left  
to meandering around  
going - meow  
where is she

now ¿

## Larry Jones

### lichtenstein

(two new kittens)

- I just can't believe you're walking out on the kids and me again like this, for her!
- For them!

(Pause)

- Give me a call.
- For them!

(Exit)

- And when you do call, if and when you do call, all I plan to have to say to you is I will never give you a reason for, nor will I ever grant you a divorce!

And you'll never get custody!

(Curtain)



## Thaddeus Rutkowski

### BAD SCENES

The drawback to doing sex scenes in public is that when things go wrong, everyone knows.

Say you're giving a hot-wax demonstration and the candles won't stay lit. There is your slave, strapped to your portable bondage table, ready to receive the searing droplets, and you have nothing to drip. Your slave might say, "Anticipation is half the fun," and someone from the audience might call out, "Church candles are best; that's what I always use," and all you will be doing is flicking your lighter and waiting for the wax to melt. And, as you know, wax does not melt all that fast.

Or you may be on stage in a sex club, whipping your slave, and the music might be so loud you cannot hear her screaming the word that means you should stop. She might have a cramp from being restrained and repeatedly struck, and she may be saying, "Computer!" the safe word you have agreed on for the evening. But it might come out as "Harder!" and the audience might be maintaining a shocked silence, and you might have to console yourself later with the idea that humor is an essential part of a successful relationship.

Or you may be lecturing to a group of S&M scenesters and someone may ask your slave how she came to submit to you. She might say, "He was my friend when I had no friends. He got me through a time when I was suicidal. Now that we're together, my hope for the future is marriage."

When you hear that word you might reach out and slap her on the back of her head because she is kneeling beside you and that part of her is easy to reach. You might have to respond, "I take the Fifth Amendment on that." As a result, the scenesters might get a sudden insight into matrimony vis-a-vis the master/slave relationship.

But none of this is any reason to go private. You know that any day a porno-talent agent might see you in a live performance and sign you for a paying role in a film to be shot in a warehouse filled with empty boxes and bondage gear.

### BLADE RUNNER

If you have long been fascinated with knives, with their power and danger, you might feel a need to cut someone.

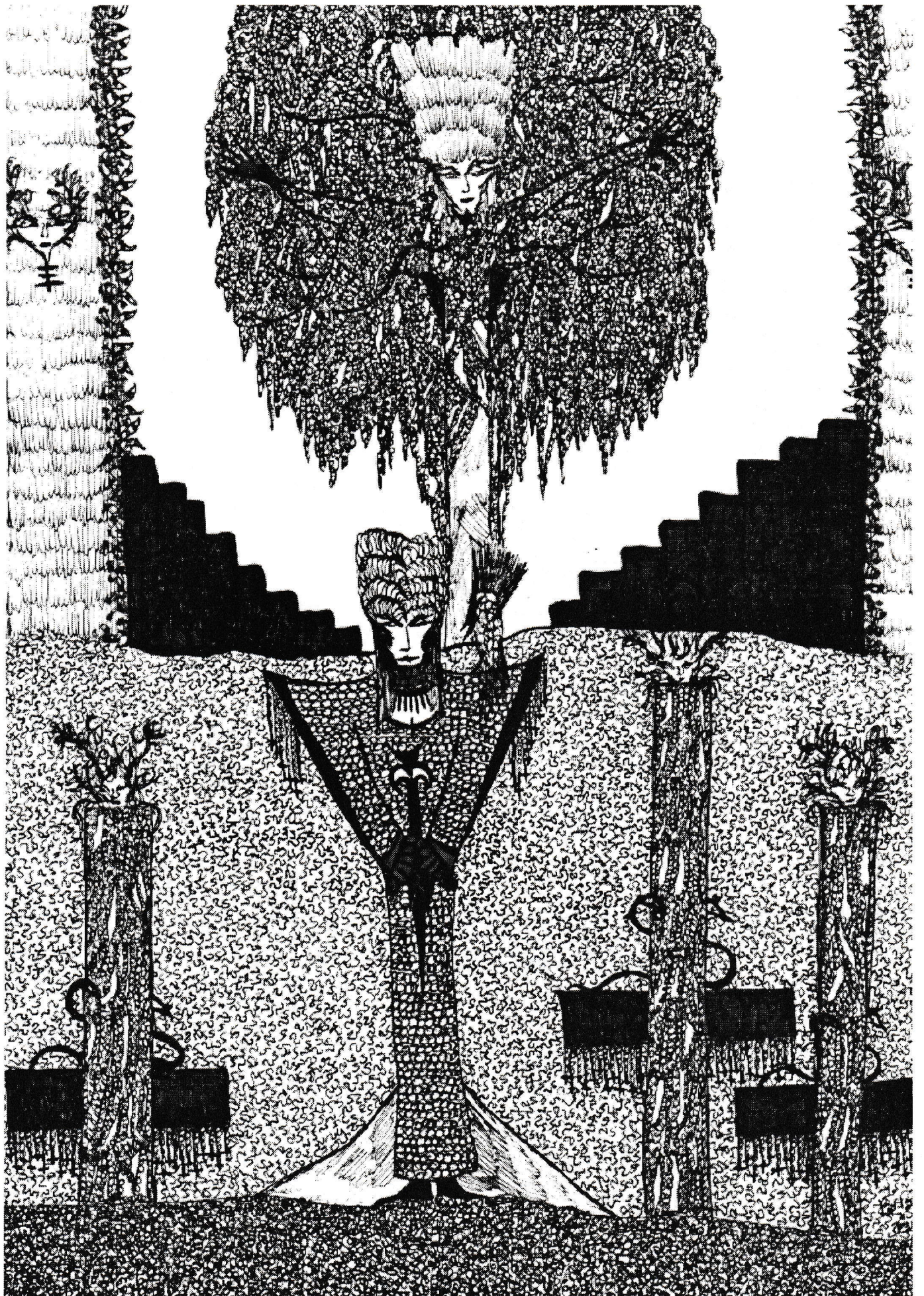
First, you should sample the stroke of the blade. But you don't want random markings. You should choose a pattern that has mystical power, like a Celtic sunrise. Such an image would look nice carved into the surface of your body. Pick a relatively large, flat area as the site. The blank slate of your abdomen, below the belt, would be good.

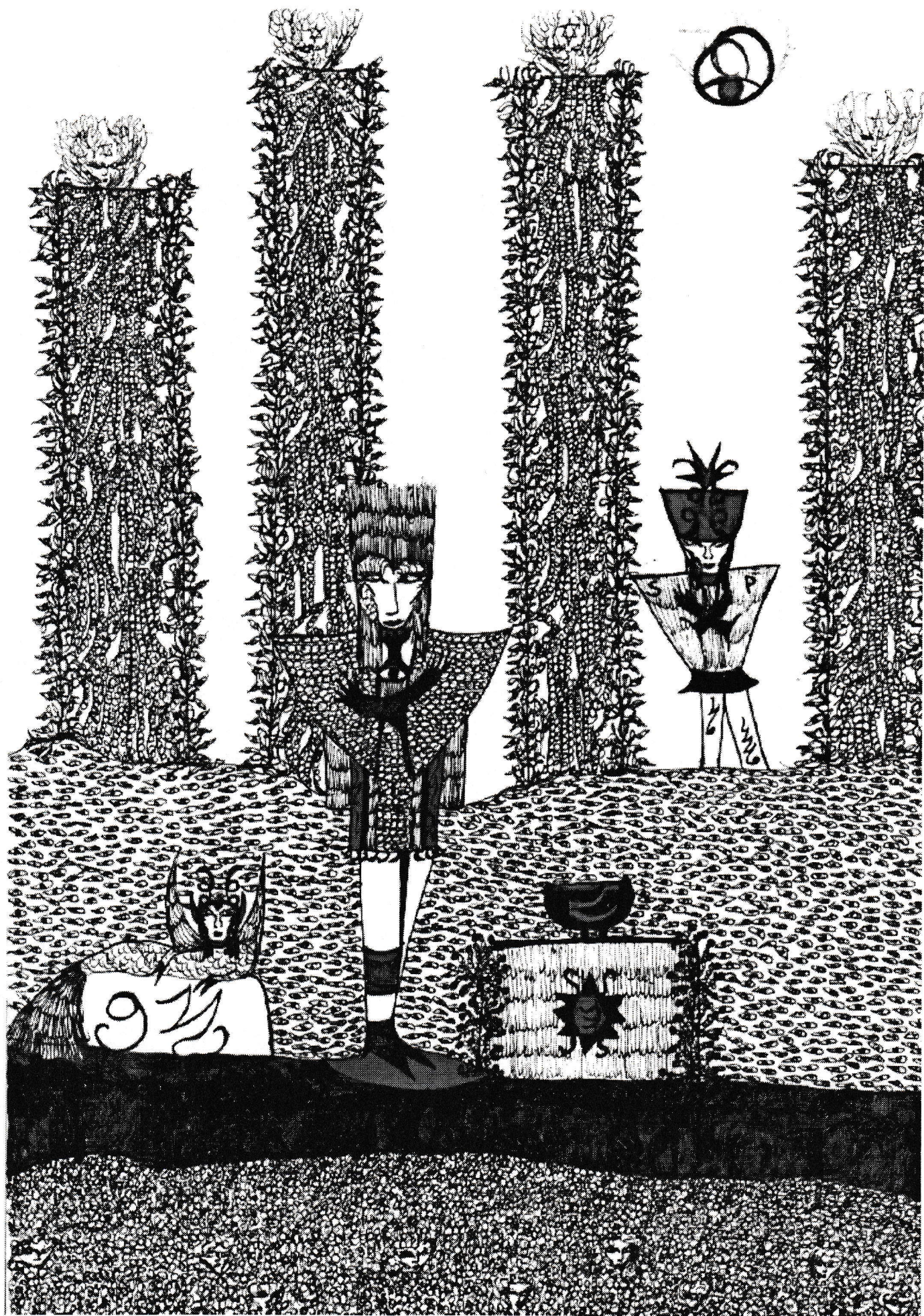
Get someone you trust to do the slicing. Blood sport is not a game. Send your spouse or partner out of the room, then notice the pressure of the blade splitting your skin. Feel the endorphins kick in. Later, notice how your jeans rub against the cut lines, sparking a pleasurable itching sensation.

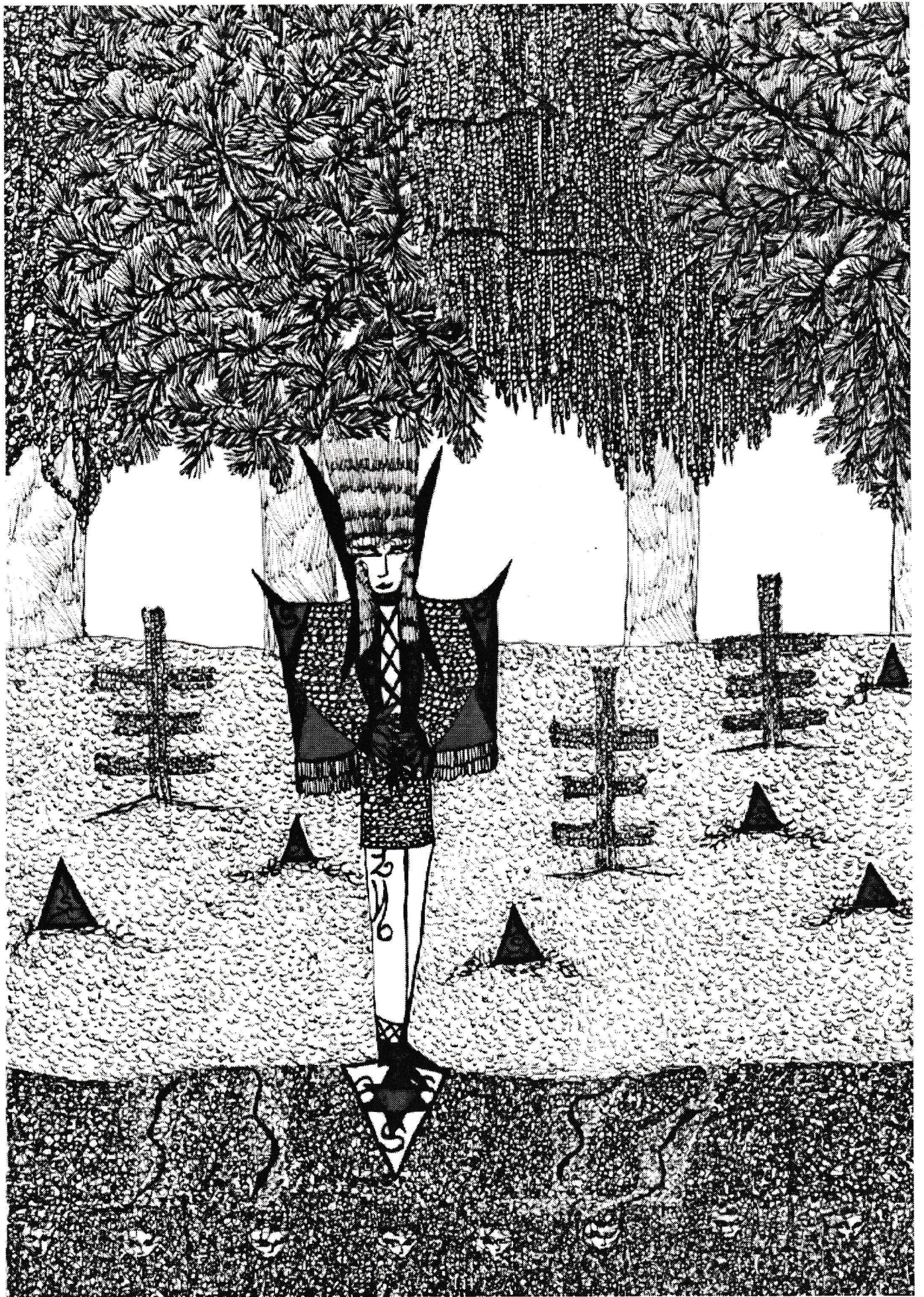
After much study, you will be ready to perform cutaneous surgery. Make sure you use a clean scalpel, one ordered directly from a medical supply house. Wash the subject's skin with alcohol, put on plastic gloves, transfer the pattern with ink, and cut through four layers with the blade. Remember that the skin has seven layers, and if you go deeper, the cut marks will form scars. (The person being cut might want scars, of course, if he or she is a really tough cookie.) Watch the blood pool in a vague red mass. Blot with paper. If you don't see enough blood, slap the skin with your hand to bring more to the surface.

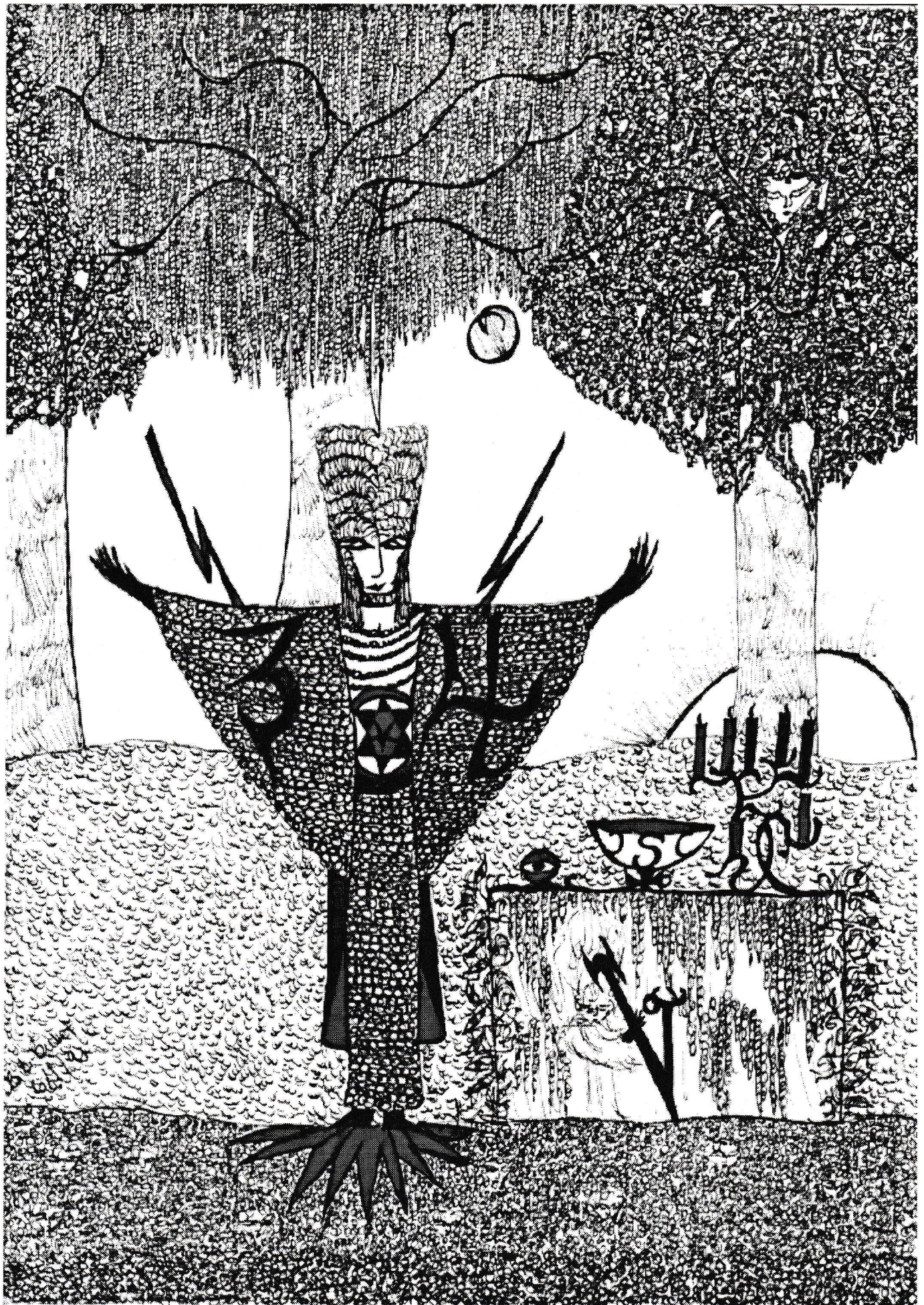
Remember that scars are a badge of honor among tribes with which you have a spiritual affinity. Keep in mind that prisoners puncture their skin in makeshift fashion and rub in India ink to gain respect. Never forget that your partner is giving you his or her life force, in a way that most people cannot even imagine.

You hold a sacred trust. So just keep cutting.









## Frank Lowe

### MY NEIGHBORHOOD, EL BARRIO

Sometimes I pull the plastic off the nails and just watch the cars go by. I remember when there was glass in this window, and that Miguel had thrown a chair at mama and missed. Some days I wish mama wasn't so quick, maybe we'd still have a window. I am thirteen years old and this is where I live. In the summertime, the men play dominoes outside the bodegas. The one on the corner is where mama used to send me - there you can get beans and stale bread with no paper wrapping. They sell forty ounce Dragon and nickel bags of pot and crack. Paco used to own the store and sell sweet coconut candy, but he is gone now.

I am watching one red car; it goes around and around. I can't see inside, but I know some white boys drive that car. They come here from Long Island to buy heroin and cocaine. They circle around looking for a familiar face, all the while telling themselves they could spot the police. They know we call the police the "jiggy" and they try to use our words. They sound so white and rich and phony. All the way home they laugh and curse about the niggers and spics - all the way home - I hope they get shot.

There are no lights in the hallway and the whole place smells like piss and reefer. I can hear that dog barking on the third floor, they never feed him. They are never home. I think a black guy lives there, but there are so many faces. Most of the street is Dominican, but nobody bothers the blacks. I remember when I was still in school - there was a black kid named Tee. He was Jamaican, I think, or from somewhere like that. I used to like to hear him talk. It had a melody like some music I like. He was bigger than me even though we were in the same grade. He was older than us and he was growing a mustache. He lives on Knickerbocker, and his brother shot a guy right in front of their house. He got locked up and Tee thinks that makes him a bad mutha fucker, like he shot the guy himself. He never was mean to me in school, but now, when I see him, he looks at me and shows his teeth. He says, "What the fuck you lookin at Mexican?" I am not a Mexican but I don't tell him that.

My sister and mother work at this factory on Bushwick and Green. Most of the people who work in the neighborhood live there; mostly the women. The men fix their cars it seems like every day and they listen to music from the bodega speakers. That music is on all day and night. At lunch time, the factory empties out for thirty minutes. My mama works through her lunch so they don't take it out of her check. They sew clothes for stores. Maria, my sister, comes down to see her boyfriend Danny. He comes in a little Mazda with no muffler - very noisy - very smoky. They sit in the car and smoke a joint. Mama knows Maria smokes but she says nothing. At sixteen, Maria is grown. Maria was pregnant in the summer. She doesn't know I know about it. She's not pregnant anymore. Lezzia doesn't know that we live in a bad place - she is just a baby.

Once I saw this commercial where they said you can join the army and fly a plane. Lezzia had an asthma attack and we went to the hospital. In the room where you wait for the Chinese doctor there is a TV. There is where I see the man. First he says it, then they sing it. "Be all that you can be!" I know I will go there and fly a jet plane. They give you shoes and new clothes and then everyone gets a gun - just like here - I mean except for the shoes and the clothes.

Anyway - mama's coming home soon. She never drinks, all she does is work and smoke Newports. She keeps a cigar and a glass of rum and a crucifix. She calls it an altar. She says the white men don't understand our religion and that is why they fear it. I stole two Newports and I know where the rum is hidden. I think I put on my walkman and watch the cars go by.

Yes poppy, be all that you can be.

## Ken DiMaggio

### THE SYNAGOGUES

More Eastern European than Lower East  
Side New York is what you these abandoned  
tenement neighborhood synagogues  
shaped like the tablets that Moses  
announced the ten commandments  
more Warsaw Lodz Lublin or  
Prague instead of Avenue  
A or Rivington Street or any of the  
other deteriorating Manhattan  
lanes near the Williams-  
burg Bridge where mostly Spanish  
spiced with Pop Culture  
American is now spoken and where the  
glittering yellow Bodega awnings  
outnumber the few remaining Jewish  
businesses that still advertise their  
wares in Hebrew lettering and while  
Matzo made by Streits is still being  
packaged into half-green boxes on the  
counters of the chicken-wire  
windowed plant on Rivington the  
synagogues which still outnumber  
the churches in this neighborhood  
are now like the ruined monuments  
of an earlier unknown long since  
vanished culture

So foreign so distant so odd your  
tall narrow oval-topped shapes just  
like one of Moses' tablets as you  
are now buried under the shadows  
of tall urban housing projects

and so hieroglyphic so secretive and  
full of ritual your slash and bar-  
like lettering that for many in this  
present culture

seems an alphabet foreign and  
untranslatable like that of the  
Etruscan

and for each one of you always  
this star that seems to be both  
talisman

and

geometry

what simplicity what mystery what  
grace

even as you sit here abandoned  
guttled or serving as crack dens

Yet

what sadness waste loss

to see so many simple but strong houses  
of worship

with no more people to claim  
them and just

left to decay

Even an unbeliever such as I

can feel the pain of seeing so  
many simple reachable and strong-  
ly built monuments of one  
community's religion and  
spirit

now haunting the present in a state  
of ruin abandonment loneliness

And even though I am unbeliever

and not even of their community their  
culture

I can feel kinship with these abandoned  
Lower East Side synagogues

I can feel

the grace mystery and  
beauty these buildings gave  
me

and even more

the sense of relation

that until I opened my own lonely  
spirit to these left-behind synagogues

I never knew I had with another  
culture another past

And how much longer

before one by one



you come down for good

Your worshippers

old scattered dead

their descendants

unlikely to move back into this neighbor-  
hood and give you new spiritual  
life

and I

I don't even know how to read your  
strange lettering or know the meaning of your

star

that's both

talisman

geometry

and now for me

grace

I just felt for your abandonment and  
loneliness

That

was not so difficult

And I just cried for the way such beauty mystery  
strength

could so easily fall into an irreversible state  
of decay

And--

That

I had no trouble

understanding

\*

## Carolyn B. Farhie

### Amateur Painter Contemplating a Blank Surface

Thinking about how  
to paint the last side of the mobile,  
the white face,  
the choices I make I can never rescind,  
the mood I'm in allows  
the snowflakes in.

Brushed new, smooth, bristly, acrylic paints,  
the first canvas I stretch and gesso  
will bear the mark of my pain,  
the words I could not say  
in yellow, black, blue and red;  
no gray.

The mark of your smoke in my face,  
the crick in your neck that forever caused you  
to twitch away from me,  
the mark of the plastic knife  
you forced through my skin,  
the mood I'm in allows the snowflakes in...  
no gray.

Never to lick my long leg hair again,  
to masturbate on my chest  
that felt the best the slide of your  
wet pussy on my breast,

Never your nipple rubbing against my clit this is it?!,  
the mark of the knife,  
the bitter ball of wax  
rolled tight in my interior.

Grasping for location, vibration that preceeds you,  
predates you, negates you,

I was alive, I was breathing, I recall

a bright autumn day playing field hockey,  
the gigantic maple tree which each season  
burst out in yellow, in orange, in red,  
snow storm from a winter past,  
sledding down a hill  
the blast of a firecracker,  
a roman candle I knew before you.

The hope that the taste of the tea leaves,  
the taste of the meatsauce,  
the taste of the left hand's index finger will compensate  
the taste of the talk you talked,

Before the mark,

Before the plastic knife,

Before you left my life,

no bitterness remains only pain  
only pain, only pain...

2/10/94

# Diane Spodarek

## Subway

the car rocks  
back and forth,  
to and fro,  
a giant sex machine,  
in a deep dark hole

feet planted  
firmly on the ground,  
my hand holds a pole  
and is soon caressed  
by hair,  
as she leans in, to  
work the new york times  
puzzle

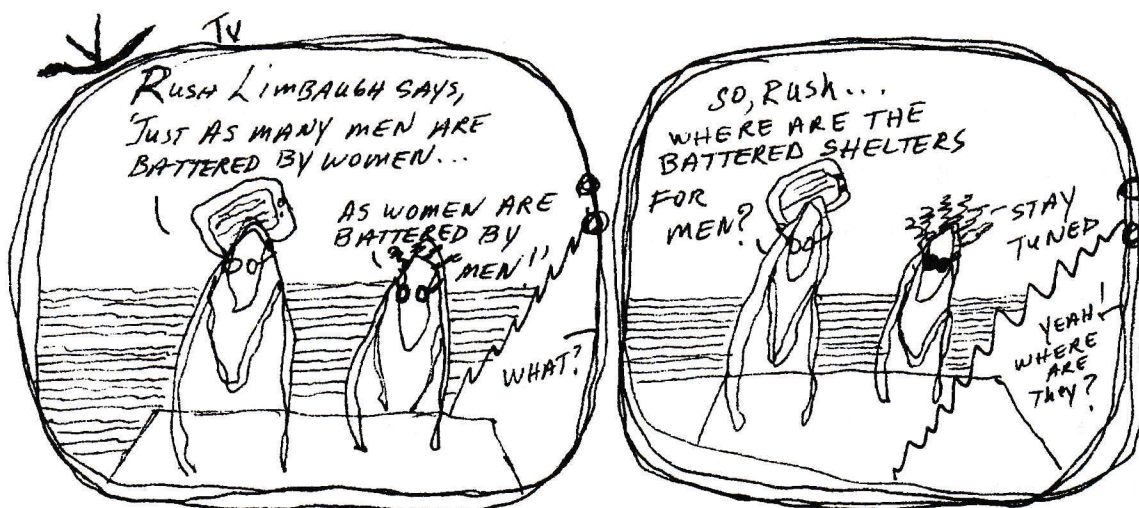
cross word puzzles  
are for morons,  
or so I've been told,  
predictable patterned  
words,  
most used words,  
found in a book  
in any book store

and she is not my type  
anyhow.  
too thin. too young.

but her long hair  
caresses my hand and arm,  
as the express car  
enters 34th Street.

I close my eyes  
and think of you,  
who made love to me  
only fifteen minutes ago,  
as the car rocks  
back and forth,  
to and fro,  
a giant sex machine,  
in a deep dark hole.

her hair.  
your memory.  
I cum anonymously,  
as we screech to a halt,  
and a homeless man  
holds his hand  
holds his hand  
out to me.



## Kelli Finnegan

### I WANT TO BE FAMOUS TOO

Maggie Estep, BAD GIRL and  
SEX GODDESS of the Western  
hemisphere has made  
a dollar-and-a-quarter (¢¢¢¢¢¢¢¢)  
offa poetry, and I want it.  
I want to be famous too  
I want to be a BADGIRL  
but I'm just an occasionally  
unpleasant Woman, instead.  
I want to be a BADGIRL,  
but I'm too long in the tooth.  
I want to be a BADGIRL,  
so I can get some press,  
so I can be on MTV  
so Random House signs me  
to a three book deal.  
AND, I want to be a SEXGODDESS.  
but now, I'm the Goddess of Love.  
I want to be a SEXGODDESS,  
but, I was just a GI-Gill  
in the sexual revolution.  
I want to be a SEXGODDESS,  
no matter how retro the implications.  
Yea, it's clear now, I want  
to be a FAMOUS SEXGODDESS!  
Sure, I used to be a  
do-me-boy-screw-you baby  
back when it was  
just called, slut.  
I DESERVE TO BE FAMOUS, too--  
I've had ALL the requisite trouble;  
trouble with boys, with men  
with bosses, and bitches,  
barbiturate, and booze.  
I want to be a Good BAD GIRL,  
but I'm so well adjusted  
that I can barely get it up  
to RANT--so I'm copper-green  
with envy, so what. Go take  
a look around Ms. GENNIE-X  
the block was full  
when you got here;  
I'm barkin at your heels,  
Teen Queen, make way,  
YO, MAGGIE ESTEP ASIDE.

## bonliz hoag

### 20 Below

#### Cardinal in the Snow

The cold makes us brittle;  
it cuts like ice;  
it whittles to the bone  
and bares us,  
no matter how many layers  
we wear  
and whom we steal from  
for our heat.

This morning I steal  
from a cardinal male  
though that was not  
my first intention  
when I came upon it,  
fluffed red  
in the white snow.  
Its down had spilled  
a fringe of red  
that stained the snow  
and made me think  
it had been injured.

No sign of struggle  
the blood was feather -  
no foot prints anywhere but mine  
trudging from the house.

I scooped it up expecting it to flutter.  
Nothing. But it still was warm  
and its eyes seemed clear.

I collect feathers  
so I noticed the beauty and  
coveted them.  
Torn between the healing and the lust,  
my warmth could not revive  
the beauty in my hands.

I planned the dissection:  
tail feathers, wings,  
and the froth of down.

The cold makes us brittle;  
it whittles to the bone  
and deeper.  
I know it clarifies, like crystal,  
but it also kills.

2-7-93

### Dandelion Wine

I've heard about the young boys

who lose their fingers

in Costa Rica

so I can have sugar to brew

my dandelion wine.

Fingers should float in my brew

if there were honor or equity.

Fingers should ferment.

Foment.

For my February excursion

into May.

When I'm really only trying to find

a little bright sunlight.

The spring explosion in the sombre winter light.

Must I find the fingers, too?

Must they stir my brew?

5-1994

## Steven Hartman

### Last Exit From Downtown

Just after I'd written an epic  
poem called Downtown & had be-  
come a Downtown kind of  
person I met a Downtown girl  
with an ironic smile &  
abstract attitude  
who wore black thrift store dresses  
lived in a 5th floor un-  
elevated rent-  
controlled one room shoe box  
furnished with Salvation Army chairs  
& of course was a poet & therefore  
unemployed  
Although I thought  
being an art-accountant was radical  
& living near Brighton Beach was more  
far out than living in Chelsea  
my Downtown girl-  
friend looked at me like  
I was dysfunctional or even worse  
a Republican  
Just because  
I did not do drugs  
no longer drank &  
made contributions to the United Way  
I was an alien among the avant garde  
a white shirt  
among black leather  
a 718 area code  
in a 212 area  
where everything is up-  
side down  
bad is good &  
God is dead

I was a question mark at the Knitting Factory Knot Room Open Reading

I was Mr Righteous to hardcore punk performance artists

I was the Man to all the Black brothers selling incense along St Marks Place

I was on the outside of  
the cutting edge  
which made me more radical  
than the radicals  
I Steven Carl Hartman  
a card carrying member of  
The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants  
had become too far out for Downtown  
& that's why Downtown magazine  
had rejected my epic Downtown poem  
I was only a surreal object of indifference to  
my temporarily unemployed

temporary word processing Downtown girl-  
friend  
but I no longer cared  
because I was tired of  
endless canoli chitchat  
with self-  
promoting ego-  
tistical Down-  
town artists who will  
kill for attention

I missed the Athenian diner on Kings Highway  
with its senior citizens &  
bad food  
I was homesick for Off Track Betting  
& the blue collar men in Brooklyn bars  
hypnotized by TV  
I missed  
COPS & the Wheel  
of Fortune

Besides  
I didn't have the money to be radical

Do you know the price  
of black leather boots?

Do you know what it costs  
to buy a Harley-Davidson?

Do you know how much money it takes  
to buy enuf coke to get laid?

Do you know how much  
to rent a studio near Tompkins Square?

Do you know how much they charge  
to see an avant garde play?

Farewell Bleeker Street espresso  
Farewell Avenue A of pitbulls  
Goodbye stench of Tompkins Square in August  
Goodbye female poets into bad relationships  
Goodbye post-cyberpunk skinheaded abortions

I'm leaving  
Downtown  
because I can't live  
in the world of poetry or  
the drug world or  
the artificial alternative Third World of  
the Lower East Side  
which is more provincial than Nebraska  
Adios LOISADA  
Christ is coming to Midtown  
& I've got a ticket to the Easter Show  
at Radio City Music Hall

Farewell Westchester Country Club  
Saturday afternoon Sohoians  
& the iron faced gallery receptionist  
earning a Downtown minimum wage  
yet looking like a million bucks  
with her Euro trash model friends  
I can no longer stay in the concentration  
camp of the avant garde  
because my values were  
shaped by Ossie & Harriet  
I was Bud in Father Knows Best  
& that's why I can never be a featured reader  
at the Nuyorican Cafe  
I am the toothy kid with the flat top  
in your senior high graduation photograph  
& that's why I'll never be admitted to  
Cafe Nico

So goodbye aspiring actresses  
working as waitresses in vegetarian Village restaurants!

So long Lolita-like grad students of NYU!

Farewell heavy metal Nine Inch Nails!

Goodbye Lounge Lizards!

Farewell Downtown girlfriend of my dreams!



Photo by Arthur Rivers



## Errol Miller

### Later, Alligator

A Mint Julep  
for the horrendous Southern crowd  
and Bloody Mary's for Chicago's angels  
then that cosmopolitan blend of alcohol  
and women works its magic  
into alluvial backrooms at night  
where blondes bleach their primrose hair  
and other ladies reproduce, every inch  
of Tara's soil is in a farm museum in Atlanta  
decades ago they sentenced people to art-school  
now nothing will endure, not even love  
or fast white horses, Cinderella  
was just great stuff from Madison Avenue  
still focusing on midnight room and board  
look at all the pseudo-bilking going on  
a man fleecing his best customers and a lady  
secretly piling on, what we need is  
a good spanking upstairs, a web of intrigue  
to unravel on Sunday afternoons, honeybun  
a little less distortion and French pastry  
a soda pop with vodka and a delightful  
letter from home with a fat check  
go on and dream, nibble on a chain of sausage  
tomorrow will find you deficient and overweight  
and not alright, completing your story in longhand.

## Merrill Cole

### *Lucinda tries to horsewhip herself into a frenzy she doesn't feel*

When the spectacle of control  
ends, the lion spits out  
the showman's grease-slicked head.

Sarcasm lost on an audience  
of captives. "Put on your spangles,  
Lucinda, save the show,"  
no one needs say.

How diligently she pulls  
the strings. There are no marionettes.

A sideshow of desertion,  
where shadow horses are all she can ride.

What slippery fingers still pull  
her strings. The fanfare is but her mumble.

The lion's roar is but a mumble.  
When the spectacle of control  
ends, the circus tent  
collapses under the pretense of it all.

"And the animals eat the audience,  
then?" The animals are the audience,  
but that doesn't mean  
they don't devour themselves.

### *Bring Us More Ice*

The doors are mouths nailed open,  
a silent invitation  
to shadows that won't walk through.  
They succumb to the mirrors:  
he promised each a soul.  
Blue and hollow as memories,  
they shuttle about  
his quick fingers, a movie  
he sometimes watches as he chats  
with more casual guests. Clever denunciations  
serve as subtitles. "Bring us more ice."

Don't trust the one  
who won't look into mirrors, he says.  
I can hardly hear him  
above their screams. The shadows dissolve  
in night's coated mouth.  
Drunken collaborators demand more rum.  
He sits alone and reads.

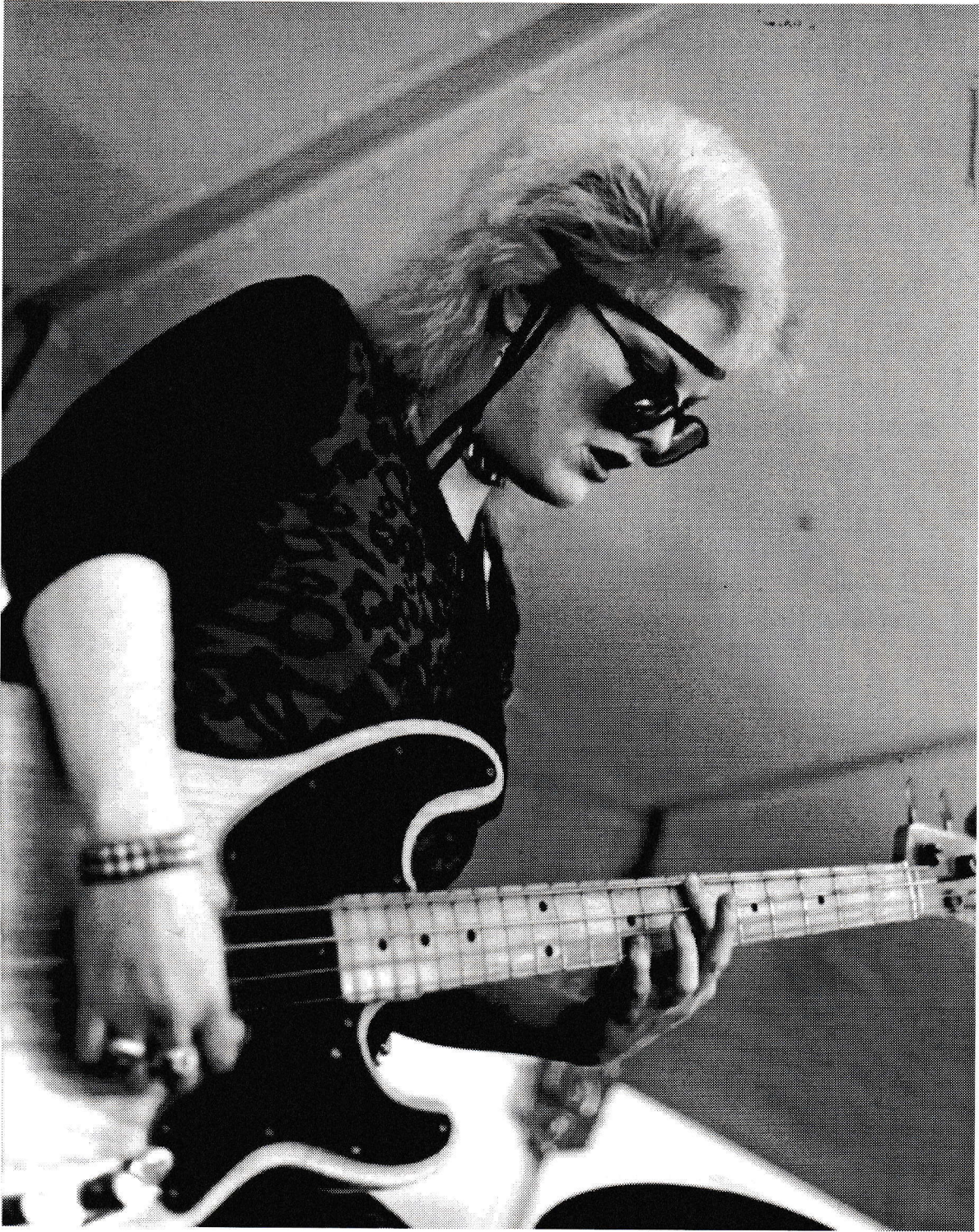


Photo by bonliz hoag

J.D. Rage

*motörhead*



## *Motörhead & Mr. America*

There he is, the typical American male  
not as good-looking this time, quite a bit  
older and trying way too hard  
Motörhead is getting ready to play  
All you care about is Motörhead  
Lemmy and his facial boils and his speedway bass  
guitar. Lemmy will never be a typical anything  
except maybe a typical amphetamine addict  
and this other guy is trying to hide inside  
a case of beer but some of him keeps oozing  
out around the sides  
and he is a volunteer firefighter  
and he might work construction or  
is an electrician's assistant or stacks boxes  
in the supermarket  
he thinks with his tight blue t-shirt and his  
thinning graying frizzy hair  
he thinks he is Mr. America  
and he is

and there you are  
forty-six and going on past infinity  
waiting for Motörhead  
'cause you want your ears to bleed  
and you want to forget everything in the noise  
you want to be bombarded with sound because  
that is the only thing that can touch you  
without the shiver, the involuntary cringe  
of skin on skin  
but sound on skin and noise on eardrum  
and vibrations through the spine can still be tolerated  
there you are  
somehow covered with tattoos  
sixteen of them and covered so long  
sometimes you even forget you have them

remember the pain: those who forget are  
doomed to repeat and you do remember it

and there are your chains  
oh everybody probably thinks you are afraid  
of growing old that you wear chains because  
you are trying to look young that you are  
imitating the teenagers in one of those desperate  
attempts, when you know that you are  
stuck in the persona that is really you with the  
hatred and the fear and rebellion to the  
most vicious degree  
when you know that  
maybe you should have changed  
smell the coffee and grow up as they say  
but you can't, you are yourself and you have to be it  
and it doesn't seem to be changing  
but you know that they are imitating you

those people who used to ask why do  
you wear heavy motorcycle boots with  
shorts in weather like this  
and you said because I like to  
they could attest that this happened ten years ago  
and more  
now all the young girls clomp about  
with dusty boots and buckles clanging  
ninety-five degrees at least  
copying you and your mutinous ways  
so no matter what they think  
there you are at the Sting in New Britain  
Connecticut, all eyes on you because they  
usually are and because you and your friend  
appear to be possible acquaintances of Motörhead  
or at least former friends of Andy Warhol  
when in fact the less people you know the  
better you like it  
and let's not forget the tattoos and the leather  
jackets with paintings of Baudelaire and Jack Kerouac  
confusing everyone because nobody knows who they are  
and let's not forget the low backed black lace dress  
and let's not forget the combat boots  
can we ever forget the tortured look on your face  
even when you think you are smiling?

He uses a modern line:  
Where did you get your tattoos?  
Brooklyn  
Who in Brooklyn?  
Huggy-Bear  
Ah, he nods  
I got mine in prison  
I always say the only place to get a  
good tattoo is in prison

He has no visible tattoos and does  
not move to prove their existence

Maybe so, you agree, but I will not be finding out  
anytime soon

He looks you up and down and motions with  
his head toward the stage  
You like this band?  
no answer required  
What kind of music did you used to like?  
This he delivers as a low blow  
letting you know that he knows how old you are  
because he is guessing you are in your mid-thirties  
Sex Pistols you say flashing on a vision  
in Rochester, 1965, Rolling Stones concert  
You are eighteen  
they are being hustled off stage because  
the crowd will not behave, refuses to listen to the  
message over the bullhorn and keeps trying  
to storm through the barriers while you  
attempt to get a photograph of Mick Jagger

Lemmy has not yet taken the stage here tonight  
and Mr. America is not finished with you  
you turn to your friend hoping that this  
guy will take his drunken inquisition elsewhere  
The Sting is nearly empty looking like a wedding hall  
with no bride and no wedding band, round tables  
with plain cloths ring the edges of the room  
Motörhead is not a big draw in Connecticut  
In Manhattan there would be lines of fans  
around the block and no room in the club for tables  
the audience will stand and be very happy if their heads are not  
crushed by the moshing dancers who sail  
through the room menacing steel booted feet first.

Mr. America is gone now and Motörhead is making its way  
through the curtains, slinging on their instruments  
turning on the fans that make their hair fly out behind them  
lending the illusion of even more speed

But here he comes again unable to retire  
with grace  
This time he resorts to an old line: Got a light?  
No, I don't smoke, you say.  
Leaning over in front of you and asking your friend:  
No I don't smoke either he says.  
so Mr. America pulls out his own lighter and lights his  
own cigarette  
I know you from somewhere, I know both of you  
I don't think so.  
Don't you come from New Britain?  
Not on your life.  
Well, then I saw you in Tattoo Magazine  
Not me, I've never been in that rag  
He shuffles uncomfortably and pulls  
something out of his pocket.  
I always say you should be nice to everyone  
you meet, he smirks, implying that you are not being nice  
to him.  
you wish for your switchblade  
the K-55 you carried in the Seventies

in the Lower East Side  
want to insert it swiftly between his ribs  
show him how nice you can be when you want to  
he displays a backstage pass.  
I'm with them, he announces

Oh yeah, I have one too, you smile  
and you show him the Motörhead  
insignia-emblazoned condom you bought for a  
souvenir

you know something, he says,  
you're not cool

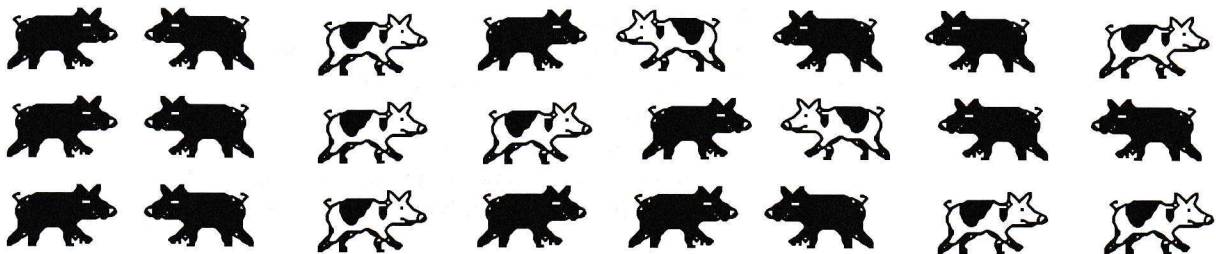
that makes two of us

He's getting ready to fight now  
that beer really taking hold  
maybe a few shots of Scotch for courage  
he will forget like they all do that you are  
a woman  
that you are a stranger  
that he doesn't know you and that  
you can't hurt him  
and with one punch he will deck you  
there it is in his eyes and ready to come at you like  
a lunging snake

you want to move? Your friend asks and he leads you away  
from the tempest.

Lemmy appears now on the high platform  
shaking his long shining hair  
singing hoarsely with his head turned up straining into the mike  
No one is in the room but you and Lemmy  
and the sound of his voice and  
the music wraps you up and submerges  
you in true love

Mr. America has repaired to the edge of the stage  
where he will remain forever  
sucking on a beer  
turbulent  
unrequited  
and  
doomed



## Jennifer Blowdryer

I lived across from the Con Ed plant on East 14th Street for 7 years, and it could've been just my imagination, but I got more and more tired, I'd bruise if you touched me, and when it got hard to walk around I started thinking maybe I should get away from there. My friend Jane decided it would be best if I lived with a kid called Adam, so she scooped me up and moved me out to Williamsburg. Even though my new place was in an area known commonly as the Toxic Mile, I felt better in Williamsburg until I started to hear a cat at night. It was outside somewhere, I could hear it moving around, with a desperate, insistent meow.

I was the third stray in a row to stay in my new room, an area enclosed with a sheet. Before me had been a big sloppy art guy on Prozac and who read Henry Miller out loud to Adam, and then a beautiful Japanese geisha girl who decided to try North Carolina for a brief, dramatic, while.

In my old apartment I'd housed a few strays, two cats and about five humans, so it was kind of freeing to be at loose ends, with no cutlery, myself. That cat, meowing outside, didn't sound free at all though, just miserable, and it tore me up. I'd gotten so far as to perch helpfully on my fire escape with a flashlight when I heard it at night, which may not sound like much but is very outdoorsy for a New Yorker.

One night my roommate and I came home with a couple of stray women, one of whom took a lot of yoga classes and was giving me a spare red lounge chair she had. A couple of large teenage girls were outside, cutting up with a cat, when it ran out in the road. My roommate walked in front of a car and saved it, and the girls asked him if it was his cat. "Now it is," he joked.

But it wasn't anybody's cat, it was the stray I'd been hearing at night, and it followed us in the building and then meowed until it got in the apartment and then stayed and watched us intently to see just what we were going to do about it. I'm allergic to cats, but it was really no problem for a few days, because I'm used to strays.

Tama Janowitz, in *Slaves of New York*, said something like this: If you live in New York, you either are a slave or have them, and whether or not you have a lease is the key factor. Well, I never had the lease to my old apartment, it is still listed in my dead grandmother's name, and she was the Queen of the Strays, one of the people who left cans at the edge of the depression picturesque style lots that begin around Avenue B. She ran around at all hours in bizarre hand me down outfits, cooked muffins in cat food tins, and took good care of her own stinky and overweight cat, whose hair dominated her mad, cluttered household.

Maybe, since my grandmother's name, Theodora, is still on the lease, we are all her slaves, the several of us who've drifted in and out of that speckled tile gray walled palace in a building complex fancifully called The Manet Building. The first real human stray I had for a roommate was Karl Hinz, a former underground movie director and speed freak who worked at Luca Film, where they made TV commercials.

I'd been in his old movies, and he'd lived with my sister, so when Karl found me after two years on a beach in the Jersey Shore, after searching with a map, pair of binoculars, van, and a constantly squawking police radio, I wasn't that surprised. Maybe I was, but after the first couple of years of living in New York not acting surprised had become a kind of local nervous tic I'd picked up on.

Karl moved into my couch right away, replacing my highstrung girlfriend Alexis. Even though she'd lived on the couch for about a year and a half and made plenty of money, Alexis had never bought a bed. Part of living in the part of the apartment known once only euphemistically as "The Living Room" seemed to be acting like you're going to move out any moment, even after years. Nobody ever bought a bed, although one junkie deigned to use my futon for a few months.

Karl was the weirdest stray I took in. He moved in with his VCR and lit the apartment with a subtle neon purple pole he placed behind the couch, Chinese restaurant style. He also put his many videotapes in perfect order in the top drawer of a bureau, copies of the *Untouchables* and the *Beverly Hillbillies* which he seemed to have originally recorded off the television in the Atlanta, Georgia area.



Karl watched these shows over and over again, faithfully parroting the dialogue, and would often make pithy remarks while I was at home on the phone, as if I was a character in a movie he was watching. He lit the entire apartment in soft pink bulbs; continuing the theme that I was a in a film. For some reason I never complained even though I could no longer read at home in the new dim lighting.

Most of Karl's behavior and methodology could be traced to a drug called Crystal Methedrine. I also had as boarders a couple of heroin addicts, one alcoholic, and two compulsive talkers who'd press on and on with the details of their delusions as I shifted from one foot to the other, wondering what to do.

The two stray cats were a lot easier to deal with than the stray people. One of the cats actually ran away from me after I had a party where I showed him off to students from Columbia University. I found him sitting on a patio across the way, listening to disco music, and just left him to try to find his new life. The second cat was so smart and likable that I ended up spending \$55 taking it to the North Shore Animal League in a cab. Its former owner, who frequently tried to sell me a used electric typewriter, had abandoned it because it tortured its own kitten, a sordid affair that ended with the owner being found dead with a needle in her arm some months later, upstairs from me in 4F.

This new stray cat in Williamsburg watched and watched my roommate and I once it got safely in our apartment, went to the bathroom in the sink because there was no kitty litter, and begged to be let back in every time it got shut out. I got sicker and sicker from my allergy, but when I called a woman to take it, the cat put its paw on the disconnect button of the phone.

The thing about New York, though, is that if you live by your subconscious things seem to happen on their own. Without trying too hard the stray cat from Brooklyn is now living in a new building in the East Village in apartment 3B, and I'm living across the hall in a new apartment myself, 3D. I visit it from time to time and unless you look really close and see the broken tips at the end of its tail you could never guess that we were both once strays. New York, in fact, may be kind only to strays. I know my grandmother wasn't that nice to anything else, and after all, she was the one with the lease.



Rat Cat, Actress/Model

Photo by Arthur Rivers

## Jan Schmidt

### Excerpt from A Little Bit of Flavor

BAM BAM BAM!

Claire's eyes popped open. Was she dreaming? The apartment was silent. She looked at Anthony. He peeked back at her from under the comforter. A sound of something hard, like a hammer, hit something soft, like sheet rock. There was a voice too, loud, angry. "You can't sleep there. You hear me? You can't keep me up all night with that. You perverts. You, gigolo. You lesbian. Lessssbbiiiiiaaan."

It was Gloria, their next door neighbor. She shrieked as she hammered viciously on the wall directly over Anthony and Claire's heads. They could hear the grit falling between the layers of the thin wall that separated their apartments. Claire sat up in bed.

"She's starting again," Anthony seethed, turning over in bed.

Claire looked at her watch, five AM. Fear. It surprised her. It wasn't as terrifying as being convulsed awake by a faceless panic. This was a different kind of fear. A nightmare where Gloria accused her of horrible crimes but left no room for a defense. How do you defend yourself to a schizophrenic having a psychotic episode? And how do you defend yourself to someone who is calling you a lesbian? If you say you're not, it sounds like you think it's wrong; if you say, so what, you convince her you are gay.

Claire ran her fingers through her hair, pulling it for an instant away from her face. It immediately fell back. "Damn. I have to get up early and wash my hair," she complained to Anthony.

"I don't give a shit that she's sick," Anthony said, "Next time she attacks me in the hall, I'm going to punch her in the face."

Claire didn't even stiffen up when he said that. She used to, until she realized Anthony wasn't a violent person anymore.

The hammering got louder. "Move into the other room. I have my rights. Lesbian. Gigolo. I don't want you in that room next to me anymore. You don't own this building, you hear me. You don't own it."

Anthony pulled Claire over to rest her head on his chest. "I learned my lesson last time," he whispered. "When I pounded back, she just got worse."

"Yeah," Claire smiled, "Me, I was so smart, I called the police. They came, she stopped, they left, she started up. Great idea," Claire mumbled into the heat of Anthony's skin. "I have to get some sleep."

The hammering stopped for a minute. Claire and Anthony lay in silence. Then the sound of heavy furniture scraping across wooden floors disturbed their near sleep.

"What do you think she's doing now?" Claire asked.

"I don't give a fuck."

"The last time I was in her apartment all she had was a kitchen table, a lounge chair and a mattress on the floor. Do you think she's pushing them all in front of the door to keep us out?"

"Probably."

BAM BAM BAM!

Claire jumped. The hammering above their heads was back. "You are not going to sleep next to me anymore. Get out of there. Get out of there. You perverts. Perverts."

"What are we going to do?" Claire moaned.

Anthony yelled through the wall, "Keep it up, Gloria, just keep it up."

"You can't make me stop. You can't control me."

"You better check your window. Those guys are watching you."

The racket stopped. Claire looked at Anthony. He smiled. "I can't help it. She's driving me crazy," he said. They could hear Gloria pulling on her window gates, rattling the metal, checking for men at the windows. The pounding started again.

Just as Gloria started to scream again, Anthony repeated in a loud voice, "Go ahead, Gloria, keep it up."

"You can't make me stop. You don't own this building. I have rights. Go ahead, call the police, I'll tell them all about you."

"Keep it up Gloria. I've got it all on tape. I'll just play that for the police."

The voice from beyond the wall quieted. In a soft tone, Gloria answered, "What tape?"

"All of it on tape," Anthony continued. "When the police come, we can play it all back."

No sound came from the other apartment. Claire laughed. "Oh, my god. You have hit on the answer. You are brilliant, baby."

Anthony grinned, making a muscle with his arm, "Yeah, I'm da man. Who da man?"

"You da man, baaaaby."

"I love the way you say that."

"Baaaaby. Baaaby. Baaaaby."

"Shut up and go to sleep," Anthony said as he physically turned Claire around to be sleeping spoon style against him. "Go to sheep," he murmured as he gently pushed Claire down, "go to sheep."

Claire wiggled out of his grasp, "I need more air."

The next morning Claire came back to sit on the bed and drink coffee with Anthony, as her hair dried. She showed him the letter that she had found pushed under her door. In a big pencil scrawl, were the words: Claire, You won't get away with it. You gave away Sonia's apartment. It is theft of building money in any count. I am taking this to court. Signed, Gloria Sanchez.

"Great. The last time she went off, she sued the building, this time she's after me," Claire said, taking a big gulp of her coffee.

Anthony sat up and took a swig of his. Claire watched his face change shape as it went from horizontal to vertical. For a fifty-year-old man, he sure looked like a kid, she thought, especially when he's asleep. Sometimes she could actually see a little baby all curled up with his big adult man's hand curved into a ball under his cheek - all six-foot-two of him wrapped in the fetal position. But sitting upright in the bed, drinking out of the coffee mug, he was definitely a man, a black man, an African-American. His short hair was thinning at the top, his mustache was always trimmed, his fingernails were groomed. He wasn't the kind of guy she usually went for, in that he was so careful with his appearance. He was distant, like every guy she'd ever been with. He was all tight and held in on the inside, underneath a charming exterior - that was like all her previous guys, no matter what race, creed, religion or lack of religion. He was a recovering addict, too. All her men before had been active addicts. This was the first one who was working at getting better.

"How can she sue us? Who would believe her?" Anthony asked Claire.

Claire crossed her legs Indian style, holding her coffee mug in her lap. "I don't know. When she sued the building, I think she went to Legal Aid. Why they helped her I'll never know."

"Legal Aid?"

"Yeah, you remember? A couple years ago when she stopped taking her medication and decided the exterminator man was after her. She wouldn't let him in anymore. Then she sued the building for not exterminating her apartment. When I saw her in the hallway, back when we were friends, I said, 'You're suing yourself, as a shareholder in the building, you're suing yourself.' She said, 'I don't care. I have a right to sue.'"

"Did it go to court?"

"Yeah. The building ended up paying these legal fees to have the judge order her to let the exterminator in."

"Do you think she can take us to court?"

"I don't know. I mean, I couldn't believe she could get someone to help her sue the building. Who knows what she can do?"

The telephone rang and they sat still listening to the machine play their message. Then they heard Frank's voice asking for Claire. "Shit," she said as she crawled out of bed and picked up the phone in the living room.

"S'up?" she said in answer. Claire could see Frank with his slight, Mexican-brown, dancer's-body standing in his apartment. It was the only apartment in the whole building that was so fixed up. Both she and he had had the floors leveled during the rehab of the building. Both had wall-to-wall carpeting. But he had added fitted Levelor blinds to the windows, fake marble painting on the door jambs, glass and chrome furniture. Anthony had smiled at her when they first saw what he had done to the apartment. "He's such a little queen," Anthony had said, grinning. If it had been anyone else, Claire would have taken offense at that. But this was one of the things that first attracted her to Anthony. He wasn't afraid of gay people. He was a hairdresser and had many homosexual friends. People sometimes thought he was gay, but he didn't get upset, he just said, "No. I like women," as though either option was equally fine.

She fingered the pencils and papers by the phone as she listened to Frank. "I'm just calling to see about the next meeting of the shareholders. It should be next Tuesday, will you put up the notice?"

"Yeah. Have you talked to Steve about the boiler? I know the new one is hooked up but it isn't finished. I'm not sure what the other work is, but we can't get a certificate or a service contract till it is done. And the commercial spaces won't pay rent till it is completely fixed. In fact, I heard the fumes are destroying the video equipment in Fred's place. But, Frank I gotta go. Before I forget, how you feeling?"

"I still have the ear trouble, but I'm doing the intravenous injection stuff at home, now that I have the shunt in my chest."

"I'm glad you're feeling better, talk to you soon."

Claire hung up and went back in the bedroom to pick up her coffee. Anthony asked in a jokey-pouty voice, "Aren't you coming back to bed?"

"No, I have to get going. I've got therapy today and I have to get to the bank first."

"You have time for everybody else, but never any time for me," Anthony said, turning away from her on the bed.

Claire looked at him. She felt drawn to the bed, but pissed that he was trying to guilt-trip her. She resisted the urge to apologize just as she rejected the option of storming out of the room. Instead she chose the response that she knew they would both be comfortable with.

"Shut the fuck up, and get in the fucking car," she said, pushing his relaxed body up and down on the bed. She remembered coming out of their building one day, and seeing a man and woman at the side of a car. He was unlocking the door and she was chattering away in Spanish at him. The man said, angrily to the woman, "Shut the fuck up and get in the fucking car." Claire and Anthony had perked up their ears and glanced at the couple, then at each other. They made a quick street assessment: a real threat of violence or the venting of understandable irritation. Claire and Anthony burst out laughing. The couple had gotten quietly in the car and drove away.

Now this was their code phrase for I'm pissed but it's all right, "Shut the fuck up and get in the fucking car."

They wrestled a little, Anthony easily grabbing both of Claire's wrists in one of his. "Don't even try that with me, sister," he said, jiggling Claire up and down.

They heard a knock on the door. Claire got up to answer it. Anthony called after her, "If it's Gloria, don't even answer her."

"I didn't have any intention of answering her," Claire muttered angrily over her shoulder. Doesn't he know better than to tell me what to do, she thought. She stepped down the one step into the tiny alcove and looked out the peephole in the door. Alma, the drug dealer's wife, a dark-eyed pretty young woman, was in the hallway with three of her children. Claire opened her door.

"Can I borrow five dollars to get the kids some lunch money. My check doesn't come till tomorrow, but I'll pay you back then." She didn't try to come into the apartment and Claire didn't invite her.

"Let me see if I have it," Claire said, and the door shut on its own. She went to her purse on the chair by the kitchen table and Anthony walked into the room. "Who is it? What are you doing?" He had a look on his face like Claire was for sure doing something stupid. Claire got pissed.

"I'm giving Alma five dollars so her kids can get something for lunch," she answered, a nasty look on her face.

"Hey, okay, okay." Anthony's face changed to a look of concern. He picked up his jeans that were thrown on the couch, and pulled out two dollars. Claire took three of her own and straightened out the five bills and handed them to Alma through the cracked open door. Alma thanked her profusely, then added, "Gloria put a note under our door saying you're stealing money from the building. Of course we don't believe her."

"Thanks," Claire responded in what she hoped was just the right note of cynicism, something to show she wasn't afraid of Gloria and at the same time had nothing to hide.

"But Tony says he wants to see the financial records for the last year."

"I'll have them Xeroxed," Claire said, shutting the door.

"Fucking dope-fiend motherfuckers," Claire hissed to Anthony. "They're gonna start shit again." Alma and her husband Tony moved in the building only eight years ago. They were newly married then, with a new heroin business, supplied, she'd heard, by Tony's mother. In five years they'd had five kids. The last two didn't live with them. Alma told Claire that they had asthma so they were staying with their grandmother. Right. They were probably born addicted and were now wards of the state, Claire thought.

"Why don't you just quit?" Anthony asked. Claire could see him examining his face in the bathroom mirror.

"I did quit six months ago and you saw what happened - no one called a meeting so nothing happened with the boiler, so we didn't have heat for six months. What the fuck am I supposed to do?"

"Okay, I don't know, do what you have to do," Anthony said as a kind of dismissal, a kind of avoidance.

"Right," Claire said. What was she supposed to do, she thought. What does it mean to be responsible? Am I being too responsible? I should quit, no I should keep on trying. Damn. I wish I had an idea of how to live, she thought.

She went into the living room and slumped back in the orange high-back chair. She looked down at her white legs. The blue T-shirt she'd slept in hit her mid-thigh. Not bad for a forty year old woman, four years off the methadone program, she thought. Her hand brushed her leg. It's the same hand she'd looked at as long as she could remember, the same knuckles, the same shape fingers, but the wrinkles were new. That's where the twenty-five years of abuse really showed. She pulled her fingers through her straight-brown hair, thin with broken, brittle ends. When will I feel good enough to have my hair done, she thought.

## Paul Skiff

-- I have begun to engage in a long, protracted delivery of punishment and cruelty to the person I love. On a regular basis I verbally assault him. This time he lays on his back on the floor. I think he is doing this to situate himself for the next thirty or forty minutes, or hour or two, because it will be easier for him to endure this session. I say, "What's happened to us, we used to communicate, we used to love each other." And he says, "I get the feeling that you are asking me to say that I don't love you, but I can't do that. Because I love you." When he replies that way I feel like I am listening to a radio or intercom, something that I can only make louder or softer. Something I can't really go near. I don't feel love.

-- I am screaming through the top of my head at the person I used to love because it appears to me that he has not cleaned out our refrigerator. I used to love him. But now I am biting from across the room. All the objects in the room seem to recede from me. Pretty soon, I think to myself, the person will leave. I want to be wearing the winter. I want to be thicker than I am. I want to be unmoving like an ended winter storm. I want to be forbidding people to be out among me.

-- I grip the telephone like a stone and throw my voice into it at the person I used to love. I tell them the only thing they can do to help me is get out of this apartment -- the only thing they can do to help me now is JUST GET OUT. I feel like I am cleaning myself off myself. I feel like I am shedding my skin or am under a giant propeller that twists air through me and screws words out of my mouth, stuffing them through the little holes of the telephone receiver.

-- The morning I hit the person I used to love I felt as though I was standing in the middle of a busy intersection, where the signal lights did not work. All the traffic went through however it wanted to. It was a lot of noise and rushing of big unstoppable things; a lot of noise and a lot of close calls. A lot of near misses. Chance taking, feeling good about getting away with something. And feeling kind of stupid. Kind of Stupefied. Kind of numb. I witnessed fast blurry things lurch by and felt submerged in a risky event. I felt I did not really know where I was. Like I have been underwater for a long time, lost my breath and I have finally made it to the surface, but before anything, before I can even recognize what the earth is anymore, I just have to let it fill me up.

-- For months my emotional states have been converting rapidly. From confident on Monday to confused on Tuesday, callous in the morning to empathetic in the afternoon. From affectionate at 4:45 to hateful at 4:55. I profess to everyone my love for all people and be coarse to the person I live with. In February I will proclaim my intention to fuck many different people, in March I will only want to try to have sex with three. I now list as many faults as I can of the person I used to love. I vilify him. Soon he will be gone. Besides, being in love with him did not save me from what started all of this.

-- Sometimes when I am not sure about what started all of this I go to visit a friend who was incested. I pick up key phrases and the jargon of incest therapy. Things like "grope session" and "power relationship" and "alienated internal sexual excitement". We talk about pressure. I learn a few things about some techniques of vocalizing and disburdening, things about self disclosure. I am confused a lot and I know it. I know I am confused.

-- It is late afternoon. I am sitting on the folded up mattress. I feel sad and I feel happy. I feel depressed and I feel like I want to do calisthenics too. I am mad and I am mean. Also, I am frustrated and I feel like I am getting somewhere. Then the person who I used to love walks into the apartment. I stand up off the mattress as soon as I hear the door open. I walk towards him, bend slightly at the waist, pull myself in, push my face at him from ten feet away and I say, "You have me under surveillance." He says, "Are you feeling a little paranoid?" To myself I seem trapped. I feel powerless. I feel like I am being cleaned.

-- It is eight thirty in the evening, there are no lights on in the apartment. I am standing in a small corner of space made by the side of the refrigerator and wall of the kitchen whose window opens on the empty breezeway where red bricks of the building, aged grey, have become brown in twilight. Shadows of the room are dense. I am standing in the corner, shadowed. I have my right hand over my mouth. I am giggling. Then the person I used to love opens the door from the hall and walks into the apartment. Through the murk he peers at me. An expression of concern fills his face. He says, "How are you feeling?" I bring my hand away from my mouth. I move my hand a short space away from my face then turn the palm of my hand back and forth. I say, "I'm feeling, kind of....?"

-- This was never told to me but is part of this story: --The person I used to love is in a cafe. A woman who knows us comes up to him. She says, "What's happening to you and her is so sad but it is uplifting too. Because you still want to be with her." This was never told to me, but is part of this story: --The person I used to love is eating at a small restaurant. By coincidence the one waitress is an old acquaintance of mine. She says to the person I used to love, "How is her mind?" This was never told to me, but is part of this story: --One of my dear friends says flatly into the face of the person I used to love, "She's becoming a slut." This was never told to me, but is part of this story: --A woman friend says to the person I used to love, "When I saw the way she was acting at the party, I just thought she had a drinking problem or something."

-- I want to find out what phase the moon is in tonight. My period is coming and that makes me really horny sometimes. I might be masturbating soon if my finger doesn't make me cry. I am in my garden pulling up weeds out of my spices and herbs. I am protecting them from things that would take away their life energy. From things that would divert their scents and their spirits. Their health. Every time I pull a weed up the ground is thankful. Every time I pull a weed up the plot is more full. Every time I pull a weed up I take something out that strangles, that is parasitic, I end up staring at the spices. This is perhaps one of the kindest things I have done in many months.

-- I am putting on a metallic thread mini dress that comes down a quarter inch past my vulva. I wear panty hose and plumb lipstick. I plan to ride my bike across town and then walk the dog. I am going to enjoy all of the attention I will get. I am thirty eight years old. The entire city is my mirror. I will only be this pretty to them for a few more years.

-- The person I used to love has finally moved out of the apartment. I am empty.

-- Love is just a form of abuse. I say the word repeatedly. Love love love love love to empty it of all its meaning so it is just another thing that hits you. In a way usually from inside. Another foreign experience stuck inside me by anyone. An empty experience. Anyone who has ever said they love me has abused me. Now I am an abuser.

-- I have decided I have to stop living in despair. I think soon I will be able to make a difference to other people. I have been healed by my own cruelty. I have forgiven myself.



## Katherine Arnoldi

Tom is beside himself. I am outside. He is trying to get the door closed. It is off its hinges. The more he closes the more it opens. He runs his hand along the edge. It does not make sense. There is no reason why the door should not close, he says.

The door is the door to his store, which is not a store but a used-to-be-a-store space that is piled this high with broken lamps and boxes of magazines, photos of Betty or someone like Betty, paintings and amps.

Tom is filled up. He is running down the street. He is waving to the man in Hawaiian clothes. He is giving a man with a broken eye a dollar. He is feeling his back pocket, touching his lips, smoothing an eyebrow, pulling down his hat. He is feet first there on Seventh Avenue, everywhere leaving parts of himself.

I have some here with me now. A doll made out of felt that hangs by its neck in my bathroom, a painting signed by C. Masselos in 1942 of two horses prancing antelope-like on grey paint, another one of sputniks on red and a photo of a barbecue, a close-up of coals, hamburger meat, hot dogs and tongs.

We are riding in a cab from Central Park. He is draping my legs over his legs. He is putting one hand then another on top of mine. He is asking me if I want out but it is too late.

Tom is in a hurry. He does not have much time. He has to make money. He has to be careful or he will lose something. It is true. When he leaves, where he dropped his pants are tokens, roaches, nickels, dimes.

It is Friday. This is after he told me, yes, he is living with someone who has a good job, who makes a good place to live, who is back from a trip. We are at The Hat and he is taking my drink out of my hand, dropping his food on the floor, picking up his plastic bag full of things to find a place for, full of things that placed just right are more than what they are, more than just his gift. He is changing the subject, saying that that and a token will get me to Brooklyn, but I am not going to Brooklyn.

Inside me a gene is missing. It is an empty space that does not speak, that does not talk about something important, something that would tell other genes how they could lead a meaningful life, making a protein, becoming a part.

Tom has rolls of fat around his liver, a square trunk, a feminization of features that some people call the stage that is next to the last. It is a body type I love for reasons that are buried inside me in a place that is not silent, that is always speaking to me, a place that is a double helix of messages that tell other places in me to want, to move, to twirl my hair around my finger, to wish I was more this, less that. It is a place I am learning not always to listen to but this time, this last time, I am going to just do a little bit. I will not get hooked. I move toward Tom.

# EAK

## August Story

To find the right way to say something, the correct combination of words - then to express disappointment and give thanks to the nameless one because your senses were baffled, but not for long.

Sometimes in falsity one finds a shadow of the Duende - but only a shadow - as flamenco dancers cross themselves and dance away the sorrow of the world. One would think how they would feel about a caress of smoky air in a room full of shallowness where the courtesans court and flirt while falling in love quickly with faces, not emotions.

To express to void of walking away after realizing that half of one small piece of the world makes faces and craves for attention - while in some small hovel above, this poet lived for fifty years only to have words stolen.

There's less and less places to run - the highway always comes back to the point of departure- while Celine and his cat come to mind in some squalid Parisian slum riddled with typhoid and the ailments of cholesterol and poverty.

Berlin of the twenties comes to mind - the endless party fronting for brown shirts and boots. The way books were burned in red angry bonfires. And Chris Isherwood saw it and painted the pastel portrait before running to the safety of not being one of the hunted.

But everyone is prey, even the prince who died in the castle and had his entourage vanish one by one. Even the summer boys who play their life away before being sucked in by the wave that only a fortune teller with a packed suitcase saw - before going back to the desert.

Edith Piaf sang 'La Vie en Rose' while mortar shells fell - the sparrow, the little sparrow - "Bravo pour le clown." And when she finally found love, Marcel Cerdain's airplane fell into the ocean after winning the middle weight title in New York.

And she shot morphine the way Billy Holiday did, plagued by bad men and a broken heart. Finally the music stopped - "Arreté la musique. Arreté la musique." and the whole world went quiet for a moment - -

For a moment the former prostitute showed her heart while the virus lurked like this hidden monster inside her mucous membranes. And then she laughed real loud - at the world that had forgotten her - she was the planet for a minute - the whole planet - she was Atlas and then turned into a mountain.

To the barfly the bartender is a special friend - a sexless sexy smile, all ears to conversations no one wants to hear. The keeper of a secret that can eat away the night.

But the addict has no friends. And always until death the gegun of despair visit around four A.M. when the effect of the last spike - the last glass of vodka began coming to a close and despair begins to take hold - and in dishonesty, no one is more honest than the junky who knows what to do to fill the hole that measures more than the swallower of galaxies somewhere in the Universe. The junky is a black hole - the blackened dwarf sucking up energy - a burning rainforest -the zipperless mind fuck - a tear burning on Earthside cheek.

So came the first world war, and then the fascists - and the luftwaft bombed Guernica and the train tracks toward the camps were never bombed by the good looking all white Allied fly boys -

So then came the twentieth century hunger - and blood ran more than ever. And the bomb scared a death wish within the heart of everyman who drank whiskey and despaired over his children's behavior.

And everything is brought up by the Knomes of Bittenburg who plan the latest fad and everyone is marked.

It was at a time that tattoos were special - for sailors and outcasts for dregs - for prisoners of faith in the Gulag. It was at one time that tattoos were a cry of permanence in chaos - a religion of the soul.

Maybe before the rapture they mean nothing. Maybe before the rapture there is no soul to bear - none of the deep guttural vomit in the N train after shots of liquor and smack - before a night nodding in Father Dembo Park.

And William Burroughs does sneaker commercials and counterculture is a brand new hip bar full of people the day it's built. And maybe now it is the television beef called poet. With no heart - while the salt of the earth is screwed and Caesar's Legionnaires patrol the streets in police cars with closed windows.

## II.

That night the womanchild on the verge of being all alone looked beautiful, but it was a tricky beauty. It was a desperate beauty to be watched - to be part of the scene. And attempt to not fade away. That night the flamenco Dancers walked in the living room.

They danced! They danced - - away their sorrows - and almost took mine away. But the eyes that have seen a million years don't forget easy. And a dozen dead oceans yearn for algae and fish. In bits of sleep there was the primal memory of the anemone kiss - and I had seen her vulnerable - and so small and alone.

Maybe I wished she had Frieda Kahlo's eyes, or the heart of Edith Piaf, but it was only wishes. Only thoughts to keep myself occupied, while waiting for the call of the harvest moon -- to keep myself occupied before the ship came to port.

Frieda used to call Diego - my little toad, my sapito, but she loved him and she painted blood pictures. I was once with in her house The Anahuacali though long after her death. The smell of passion soaked the walls.

Down the street two friends fall in love. They cry over each other's letters, they have the gift. I myself facilitated much of it, the matchmaker.

I feel so happy for them. They both were junkies, well no one ever was a junky - we would talk about our habits, the teeth grind - the abandoned buildings - the street - when they read me their writing - I privately began to cry.

We beat it for now, just for now we beat the line - the morning sickness - maybe addicts are pregnant - we beat the shakes - the vomit - and we still play with fire.

Last night before the dancers I saw the girlchild and tried to picture staying up all night in the Chelsea Hotel - I couldn't, her eyes were somewhat vacant. She had fallen in love with the picture man, with the perfect attitude, the right hair, the cool tattoos - she was willing to be a notch in his scratching post.

I felt sad, immeasurably sad but I am a carny - I've been a whore - I've sucked dicks to make the run - I have been homeless and slept with lice.

I've stared at death twice and came back alive - but I felt sad and I felt sorry and I felt lucky. Very lucky. She hugged me and my stomach almost turned. She, she was not burning. She was what we used to despise in the day: I felt no bitterness - I am over that with people - too many have died around me - too many are just grateful to get a cigarette and a quarter.

I thought of Anna - her abortion. How she wept when we left the clinic. Her strength - so alone in the squat having to model for the art school to pay her food bills - her expired foreign passport.

She hopped on a bus and went to New Orleans because she had to see it. I missed her - the way she lights candles on Friday nights and kept telling herself - everything will be all right. I was full of hope, suddenly.

On the stove I have potatoes, the usual potatoes sizzling - comforting - complimented with oregano and pepper. The smell of onions begins filling the kitchen. It's comforting.

Maybe I'll move to Woodstock for a while - maybe when Anna comes back I'll ask her - she is a good woman - I can see her putting on twenty pounds - and more and still digging her -

The dancers will be leaving soon. I've been up all night singing the Goat-Song - Tragedy - that's what it means in ancient Greek. They are very tired, I can tell, their feet are dragging at pens tip.

Soon I must force myself to eat, right after they leave. I am almost at peace - only wishing my last memory of the girlchild would have been a good one, a pure one - and soon I must say good-by and tear a small piece of cloth - write a poem of mourning for a small illusion that occupied my mind.

The dancers are beginning to fall, their legs are dragging as my vision blurs. Soon she will be the memory of the courtesan who befriended the jester.

Soon she will be a nameless face from the memory bank of avenue walking. Maybe I'll give her this story, let her have something of me to look at in the winter -

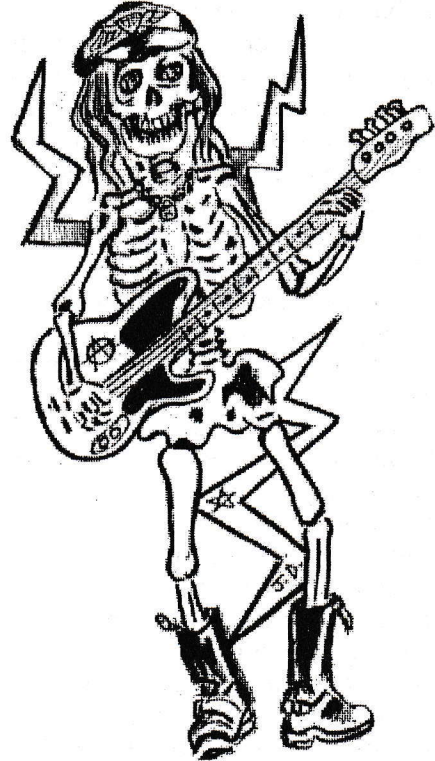
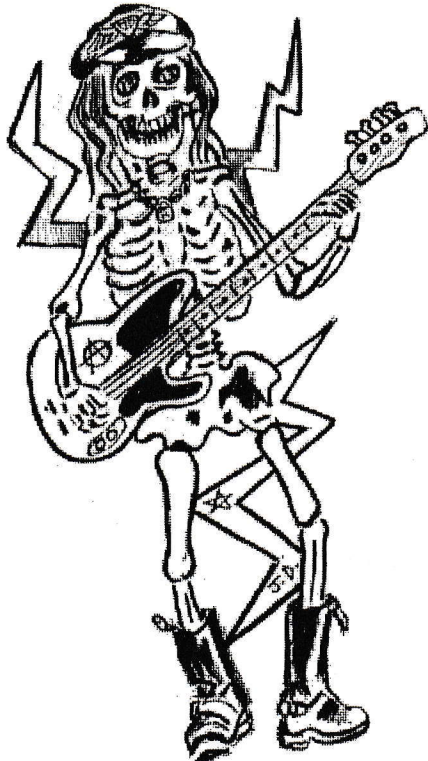
Soon, soon I'll sleep with the dream of Canada - my suitcase is packed, it's been a long, long night and my lungs are beginning to burn.

Maybe when I come back all the faces will have changed - maybe the "Duende" was here all night - but he is special - as Lorca found before the bullets of the Falange firing squad.

They have left, its ten A.M. - almost bed time - the coffee is weak - I will sleep soon - her number is off the book - and soon the digits will be scrambled - she will mean nothing.

I am lucky, very lucky - I beat the Monday one more day. My veins are clear. Next week I might go do the ska but not with her.

Next week I probably won't even think about her name - life moves on - as the sparrow sang - Arreté -Arreté la musique! ---



## Chantay Jones

When you look out just what do you see  
Can you see what it's like to be black like me  
do you know limitations as nowhere to go  
All the life that you know is in the ghetto  
Where the people you know and the dreams which you cling  
are lost in a world surrounded by no self esteem  
Where your mother works herself into the ground  
and for the past ten years daddy couldn't be found  
Where seeing someone stabbed doesn't leave you discontent  
because in your life it's an everyday event  
Where blood is no longer something which travels through your veins  
it's now your little brother's newest street name  
When you look in your backyard you won't find a pool  
your backyard's an abandoned lot filled with dog stool  
Let's talk education. My teachers don't care  
in reality I am lucky that they're even here  
Where a dream exists only in my mind  
I can seek all I want, but I'll never find  
the world just seems so hopeless to me  
I'll turn my head the other way and see what I see  
I'm looking back at my ancestral land  
to compare with the problems I now have at hand  
My sisters were raped, beaten and sold  
My major problem is I can't afford gold  
Black Men and Black Women were denied their names  
I wonder if they'd be concerned with unemployment claims  
The languages they learned from the time they were children  
As adults they were told these tongues are forbidden  
I may not have much, but at least I am free  
and in this life what I have belongs to me  
When I work hard it may put me closer to my grave  
but it beats the hell out of being a slave  
It hurts to know my ancestors gave the skin of their backs  
But it makes me real proud to know, that I too am black  
I asked you if you could see, just what it was like to be black like me  
There is the answer or shall I say key "whatever your color be the best you can be."

## **DARIUS H.**

**THIS IS A LETTER TO YOU H.I.V.**

**HUMAN IMMUNO-DEFICIENCY VIRUS**

**THE WAY YOU MAKE ME FEEL EMOTIONALLY IS A FUCKING SHAME. YOU PUT FEAR AND SHAME INTO ME. YOU MAKE ME FEEL UNWANTED AND ALONE.**

**HOW CAN SUCH AN ORGANISM, SUCH AS YOURSELF CAUSE SUCH TOTAL CONFUSION, DESPAIR, HOPELESSNESS AND LOSS IN ME?**

**WHEN I FIRST HEARD ABOUT YOU, I WAS IN TOTAL SHOCK AT WHAT YOU COULD DO. I HATED YOU THEN AND I DESPISE YOU NOW. YOU COULD MAKE A STRONG MAN WEAK AND EVEN ATTACK DEFENSELESS UNBORN BABIES. WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO KILL? WHY DO YOU MAKE ME FEAR YOU? WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO ME?**

**YOU DIRTY MOTHERFUCKER. HOW DO I TELL MY FOLKS? DO I TELL MY FOLKS? I DON'T DESERVE THIS, NO ONE DOES. WHY SHOULD I FEEL IMPENDING DOOM, I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU CAME FROM AND I CAN'T SEND YOU BACK. I HATE YOU FOR MAKING ME FEEL SO CONFUSED AND FUCKING CRAZY MOST OF THE TIME.**

**NOW WHEN I HAVE AN ACHE, I THINK IT'S BECAUSE OF YOU. IF I FEEL TIRED, YOU ARE ON MY MIND. BEFORE I KNEW YOU WERE IN ME, I FELT FINE (I STILL DO) BUT NOW THAT I KNOW YOU'RE THERE, I'M IN CONSTANT TURMOIL. CAN I OR SHOULD I FUNCTION THIS WAY OR THAT WAY ANYMORE. ALWAYS IN CONSTANT FEAR OF GETTING TOO CLOSE WITH SOMEONE, BECAUSE THEY MAY HAVE A COLD OR PNEUMONIA OR ANYTHING. AND I KNOW THAT FUELS YOU.**

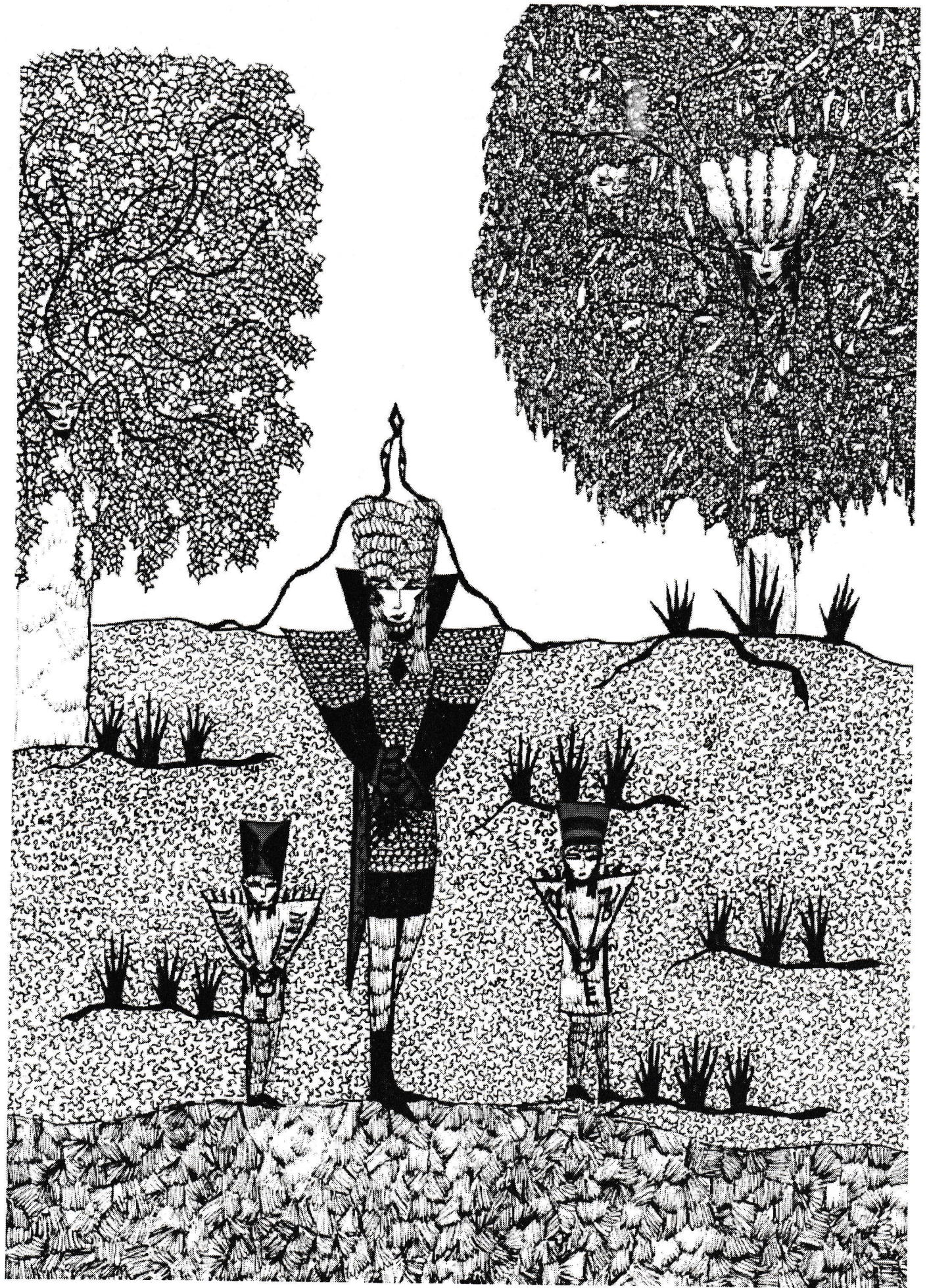
**IF SOMEONE DIES BECAUSE OF YOU, I WONDER WHEN WILL MY TURN COME. MY LIFE WAS STARTING TO LOOK GOOD, I BEGUN TO SOBER UP FROM SUBSTANCE ABUSE. NOW I HAVE TO DEAL WITH FIGHTING THE URGE TO PICK-UP AND THE FIGHT OF LETTING YOU TAKE OVER ME.**

**I WANT MY FUCKING LIFE BACK. YOU ROBBED ME, AND I CAN'T ARREST YOU.**

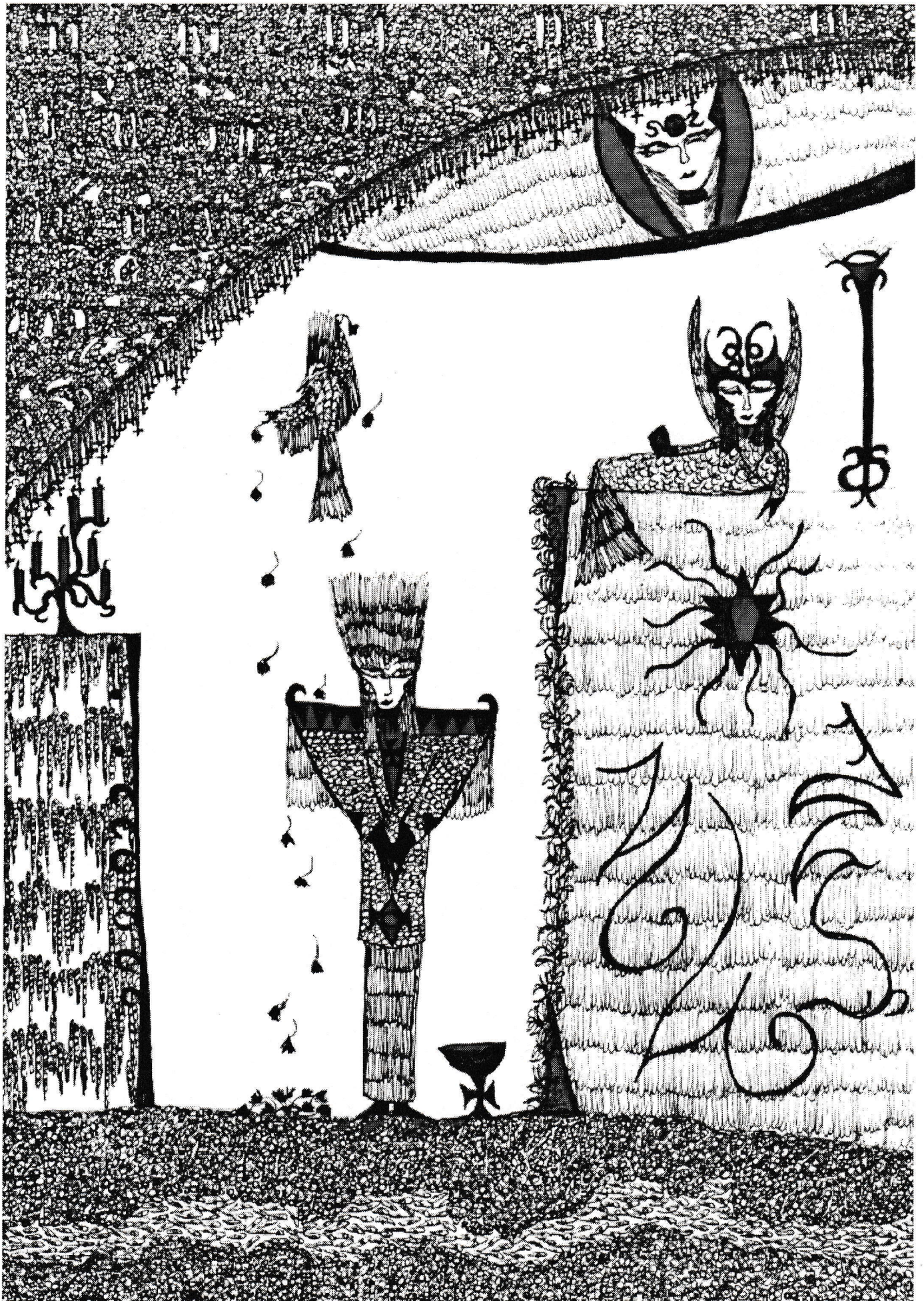


Photo by J.D. Rage

**BeBe Bullet - Featured Artist**







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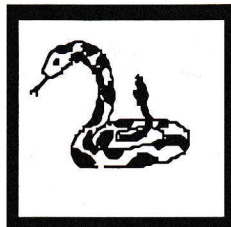
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