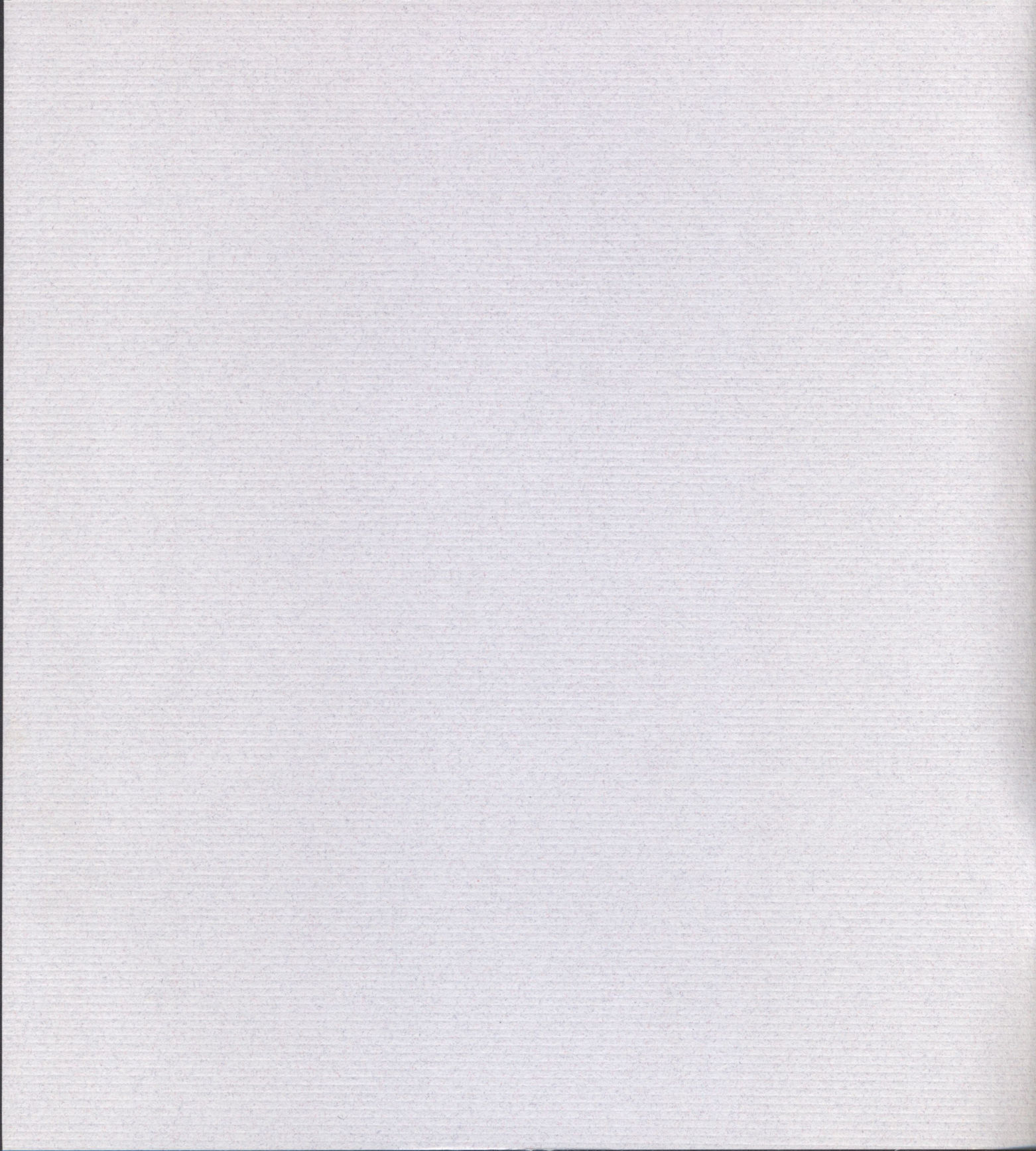


SPRING  
1990

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**VOL.  
XXIII**



**SPRING  
1990**

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**BRUCE  
GILBERT  
KELLING**

"I wouldn't necessarily call what I write 'poetry.' It is more like ideas put down on paper. To call it 'poetry' makes it sound too educated, I guess..."

## "My Gift"

While I was away  
 My Grandmother called me.  
 She asked me what I wanted for my birthday.  
 I told her, "A FAMILY PACK of Ivory Soap".  
 I believe, if I'm not mistaken  
 There are six bars of soap in the "FAMILY PACK".  
 Each being  $99 \frac{44}{100}$  natural.  
 It leaves me squeaky clean.  
 People like to be squeaky clean.



---

**R O Y  
V I E I R A**

*"To create art is to create a world. To publish art is to impose a world on others. To read art is to allow other worlds to impact on oneself. Yet, it's never quite that simple, for, 'when you look long into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you.' (Nietzsche)"*

*Poem to Meg*

Take a sail boat,  
that would be my way  
    let others live in a Blazer  
or a house on Saginaw  
I will be content  
with a boat to sail

Now I want a dry island  
floating in my mind  
where my blazing-haired daughter  
will throw rocks  
at invisible Ulysseses  
An island with rocks  
and birds, cached in crags  
music in the bright air . . .

A place where  
Transportation can never find me.  
And squatting in an adobe hut,  
I will watch our split-atom world  
from behind  
a veil of gulls  
till, with increasingly incessant liltng and lifting  
my hair burns from gray ash  
to blazing red enough  
to make you weep.

# THE JASON

## *Untitled*

your gaze liquid crystal  
eyes, soft wild spring water  
dark trout plashing

skein pulled tight  
on solid frame  
kite in tempest wind

I watch your coming  
breasting white foam  
the wind, taut in your rigging

the range  
through cloud patches  
sunlight playing  
over curves and crevices  
your body filled with phosphor-life

I curl on the doorstep  
a wait in doggish patience



---

**D A W N  
PATTISON**

*"I like kites. And  
frogs are okay, too."*

*Jezebel*

This morning I rise slowly, loosely  
gather up my hair,  
strip the sheets.

Outside I sense the falling rain  
feel its gentle lapping at the window,  
a sleepy sigh, a sinking into cool  
and gray.

The withered heat gone,  
breathing comes easy.  
I smooth the whiteness down  
soften out the creases of new sheets,  
go and crack the curtain, lift  
the pane.

The rain flows in  
mists my cheek, tired skin.  
Light fills my eyes, but gently,  
like a flower dropping petals.  
The street now wet and slick with oil  
streams empty,  
no one passing by to point  
or stare.

I smooth my rumpled hair,  
touch the names they utter  
"whore" or worse, walking by.  
But "Jezebel," shrilled by some woman  
hobbling on to church  
stays with me —  
I say it to myself  
and hear the rings and peals  
of tulips tolling in the sun.

## THE JASON

But rarely can I bear full sunlight,  
my eyes so weak from night  
I squint and  
cannot recall the faces of the men.  
There is only a sigh, a gentle sinking  
into gray —  
their shadows resting  
heavy for a while and they are gone,  
trickling out the door,  
a black stain that runs  
down the neighbors' tongues.

Outside  
in the rain I stand  
and rinse the sweat away,  
feel the touch of this one or that  
falling off like petals,  
washing soft the stain,  
leaving behind smooth whiteness,  
a gentle light.

### *Hunting*

Stepping off  
the hunting trail  
grunting over fallen logs, boots soaked,  
I found a sleeping deer  
beside a grounded  
rotting oak.  
He didn't move.  
He hadn't moved at all  
but for the rise and  
fall of the sorrel ribs  
and compulsive  
twitching ear. His hide  
shone dark like stained  
mahogany, richly grained  
with black-tipped hairs.  
And under the throat  
unfurled long curls  
of white  
as pure as snow  
but for the few burrs  
tangled there.  
His head pressed in the reddening  
leaves, pinned beneath  
great branch of antlers  
forking like a tree —

*(Continued)*

ragged and wooden  
 yet the points worn  
 smooth like ivory.  
 A hunter's prize —  
 symmetrical and curved  
 but for one tip broke  
 off clean.  
 I thought of the gun  
 in my hands,  
 how the polished stock  
 was not so rich as  
 that hide,  
 how a bullet had  
 probably nicked one tip off clean,  
 ruined the rack.  
 Shattered the completeness of it.  
 I gripped the gun,  
 the cold aching in my knuckles,  
 my boots weighed down  
 with water,  
 hoping for  
 the neck to strain  
 and the head to shoot up,  
 see the shoulders heave,  
 legs gather, jerk and lurch —  
 that I might  
 free the bullet, freeze  
 the instant —  
 watch the legs buckle back down,  
 the horns slant gently back  
 in the cracking branches,  
 hear the sigh ...  
 Instead I  
 kept my eyes on the rise  
 and fall of the sorrel ribs,  
 lifted my sodden feet,  
 let them fall away.

THE JASON



**Horses in Field**, monoprint



---

**AMANDA  
WELLS**

*"This poem is written  
with love to my  
Graveyard Family."*

*1091 15th St. Gone*

One oh eight oh,  
One oh nine oh,  
One four eight five.  
One oh nine one is gone,  
Just like all the others.  
A pioneer was here  
Fought a war  
Brought a bride  
And buried on the hill.  
What is left is a sign  
Caution: Do not play on or around  
On a dumpster by a dump  
And two children playing with a shopping cart.  
It rattles on the cracks  
Where a boy may have jumped  
So as to save great-grandma's back.  
Honeysuckle blooms on the drainpipe  
And the new/old expensive/cheap apartments creak.  
Great-grampa might have thrown  
    a plum pit over his shoulder  
As he stepped out to fetch the milk and paper  
To see his name in print.  
See what's here now.  
House one oh nine oh across the street,  
The age your house might have been,  
Has bedsheets in the window  
And plywood in the cracks.  
He'd return to tell me if he could  
Of his home  
On the other side of the tracks.

*Deckhand Trapped In Fish Hold  
During Stormy Weather*



**T O M  
HENSHAW**

In I went  
nudged by some  
fathomless wave

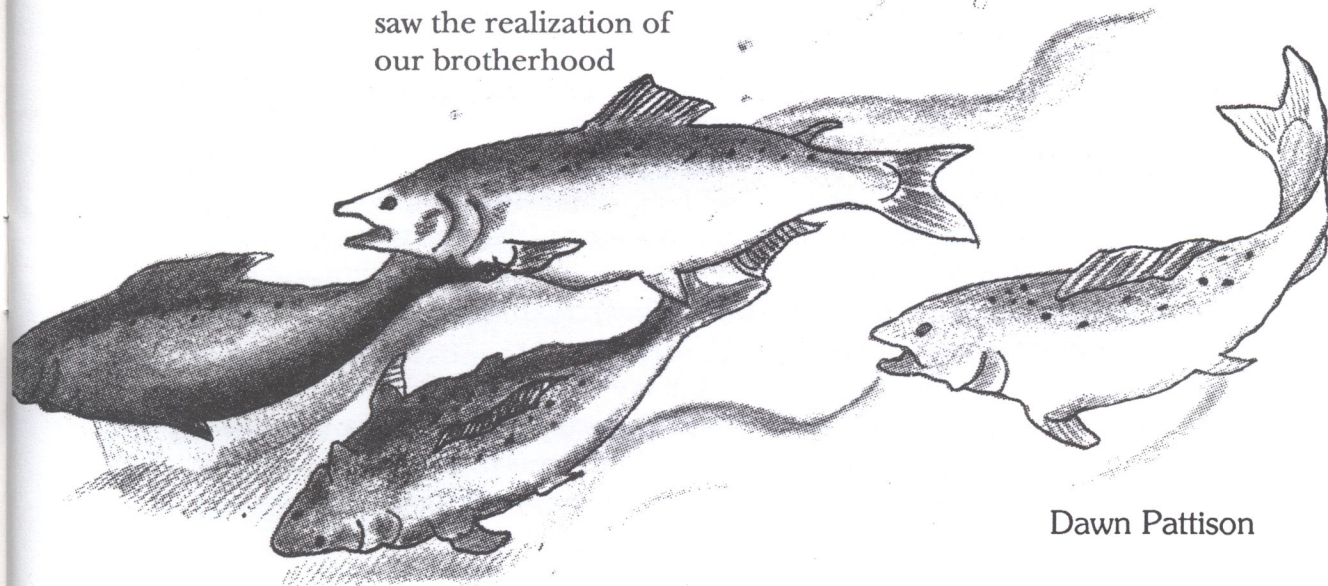
The heavy hatch covers  
clapped down  
securing my watery tomb

Twenty-odd thousand humpback  
salmon  
dead since evening  
embraced me

They well understood  
my danse macabre  
within the chilled  
bloody brine

The final moments  
saw the realization of  
our brotherhood

*"What I want is a  
good, strong monar-  
chy with a tasteful  
and decent king who  
has some knowledge  
of theology and  
geometry and to  
cultivate a Rich Inner  
Life."*



Dawn Pattison



## Going to California

J . D .  
R O T H

*"Always remember:  
Do the right thing."*

After Grandma died we climbed onto the roof and watched the fireworks. It was a warm July evening and the fireworks danced in bright colors above us, exploding like popcorn, falling like tears.

My oldest cousin sat by himself and sobbed. The rest of us sat on the edge of the roof, swinging our feet, watching the fireworks. It was as if the world were celebrating Grandma's passing.

I watched her die. She had been a big woman, strong and willful; but the cancer had slowly eaten the last of her strength away. She lay on her bed and stared dully at the ceiling, her eyes steely and growing cold. Her breath was shallow and sharp and her great chest rose and fell erratically. Her lips trembled occasionally, as if she were trying to speak. My aunts and uncles and cousins stood in a circle around her, singing hymns and praying. Grandpa stood by her side, holding her trembling hand. But I stood alone in the back of the room, stony faced and restless.

I did not notice the exact moment that Grandma died. One minute she was breathing shallowly and hoarsely, the next the room was silent. We stood like statues, completely still, as if by doing so we could bring her back to life. Suddenly someone sobbed loud and long and then the tears were everywhere.

I didn't cry or feel sadness or remorse. I didn't even feel empty. This was the first view of death I'd had my ten years of life and I felt strangely out of place.

So, we sat on the roof and watched the fireworks, talking softly, as if we could keep secrets from the stars.

.....

Dad died last Friday. He was sailing with Mom when he lost his footing and fell into the river. Lifejackets were a nuisance to him, and he and Mom had never learned how to swim. Mom screamed and screamed but she could only watch him drown.

My brother called me to tell me the news. I felt numb. Forgetting my homework, I went to bed, praying it was just a joke or a bad dream.

I didn't cry at the funeral. When it was over, I walked to the park and sat on the swing. Swaying back and forth for hours, I thought only of Dad

## THE JASON

and the twenty years we'd spent together. We had never been close; I had just taken his presence for granted. I'm going to miss him.

Mom isn't coping well; she's in a state of shock. She still takes messages for him. She sets a place for him at meals and leaves a light on for him at night. She says she wants to learn to swim.

•••••

I couldn't sleep last night; ghosts kept me awake. As I sat alone in the dark and the cold, pieces of my life seemed to be slowly slipping away. I needed to leave, to get away from the routine of school. I called an old roommate: "Dan, let's go visit Paul." Within minutes we were in his BMW, driving to the University of Oregon.

Dan is a great swimmer. I think that God probably meant for him to be a fish. He works hard, practicing several hours a day. When we were roommates, he often staggered home drunk at two in the morning. He'd shake me until I woke up. "Hey," he'd whisper hoarsely, "I'm home." I'd groan and swear at him. "You're drunk, you bastard," I'd say. "I'm not drunk!" He sounded sincere, but his breath told otherwise. The next morning, he'd sleep in until lunch and miss all of his classes. He and I became good friends.

There was an awkward silence as we started out for Eugene. I felt uncomfortable, glad for the company but unwilling to share myself. Dan managed to break the ice.

"I'm thinking about quitting school," he said, attempting conversation. He looked at me gravely.

"Do you think that's best?" I asked, only half-interested.

"I don't know. I don't think it's right for

me. I'm sick of all the books and shit. I need some time off. Maybe I can go to Europe or visit Dana in Australia. I just feel out of place. Willamette isn't right for me."

Dana, Dan's girlfriend, had left for Australia at about the same time that my girlfriend, Amy, had left for Germany. We were both having problems coping with their absences.

"I can relate." I reclined the seat a little and turned down the heat. "I've felt a little like that lately. I feel stifled, I just want to leave, to be some place completely different. Me and some friends talked about getting a van and going cross country next summer."

"No shit?" asked Dan. "Andy and I talked about doing that on motorcycles. It'd be such a blast. Only my dad'd never let me do it. He'd never let me quit school either. He'd kick my ass if he knew I was even thinking about it." He thought for a moment. "Shit, that'd be so great: cross country on motorcycles."

"Have you ever read *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*?" I asked. I was feeling more at ease. "It's about that sorta thing: a cross country motorcycle trip. You might like it. It's even got some philosophy in it."

"Neat. Philosophy," Dan laughed. "I need a chew," he muttered as an afterthought.

We stopped at a 7-11. Dan bought his chew and I bought some Vivarin and a six-pack of Coke. "I thought you gave that up," I observed.

"I did," Dan mumbled, taking a dip. "I did."

"I've got a fucking midterm tomorrow," he remembered as we pulled out of the parking lot.

I popped a Vivarin, washing it down with a Coke. "Yeah, I've got a paper I've gotta turn in. We can't be out too late."

•••••

Paul's dorm was locked when we got there. "Shit," Dan muttered. "We'll never get in." I waded through the foliage and rapped sharply on Paul's window.

A groggy "What the hell?" came from inside. I rapped on the window again and the light came on. "Who the hell is it? It's two in the morning?" Paul opened the door and stood at the window in his Jockey underwear. I grinned. He sighed in mock exasperation. "Just a second."

Paul came to the door in an old green bathrobe he'd had since junior high. His thin, hairy legs poked comically out the bottom. His hair was a mess. His hair was always a mess: he's lead singer for a punk-rock band called The Oozies. Paul likes to think they're socially aware. I just think they're loud.

He and I had been best friends since we were young. In second grade we built a tree fort in the big oak in his backyard. We played pirates every day after school until one day Paul's sister fell and broke her arm while she was walking the plank. She lay on the ground and shrieked in pain while we looked on in horror. We were more scared for the beating we knew we'd get than for her safety.

In sixth grade we were partners for the science fair. Our entry consisted of a miniature city powered by hamsters in a habitrail. We had rigged the running wheel so that while the hamsters got their exercise, they produced an electrical current. Paul and I thought it was a scientific breakthrough: a city powered by rodents! Think of all the problems it would solve. Unfortunately, our dreams of scientific glory were shattered when all of the hamsters got loose one night and found their way to the cafeteria. The cooks

had disposed of our unique energy supply by the time we arrived for school the next morning.

We went on our first double date when I got my driver's license. He asked out Tamara Brunson and I asked out the light of my life, Kristin Kauffman. We figured that the double date situation would make things more comfortable for everyone. We were wrong. Neither of the girls felt inclined to talk, so Paul and I spent the whole evening talking to ourselves. The movie was dull and the pizza was awful. And when we dropped Kristin off at her house in the country, the car got stuck in the mud while I was backing down the lane. Her dad had to pull us out with a tractor. Paul and I gave up dating for several months.

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"I did," Dan mumbled, taking a dip. "I did."

---

That all seemed like forever ago. Now, Paul stood before me, shivering. "What the hell's going on?" he asked, wiping the sleep from his eyes.

"We're bored," explained Dan. They had met a couple of times before when Paul visited me at school.

"It's two in the morning, for God's sake." "I know it," I said. "Show us your room." His room was incredibly small. The walls

## THE JASON

were brick and painted yellow. Two pull-out beds dominated the entire room. Two small desks sat near the windows and a single closet was set into one wall. Paul's desk was lined with his collection of existentialist authors: Camus, Sartre, Ionesco, Kafka, Dostoevsky. They were his foothold on intellectualism.

"Where's your roommate?" Dan asked.

"He knew you were coming."

We smiled lamely.

"He's out. Why are you here?"

"Dad's dead. I'm failing stats. Amy's in Germany. Why else would I be here?" I threw myself onto his bed. I was feeling blue.

"Shit! Your dad's dead? No kidding?" I nodded. "Man — I'm sorry." He meant it. He had liked Dad.

I looked out the window.

Dan saved the situation. "Get dressed," he told Paul. It was more an order than a request.

"Shit," Paul said, opening his closet.

•••••

"Hey man, where're we headed?" asked Paul as we started down the highway.

"Home," said Dan. "Medford."

"Oh," said Paul. He settled into the back seat, making himself comfortable. Dan turned the radio on and turned the heat up. I popped another Vivarin. Dan took one, too. I offered one to Paul, but he declined.

The cold October night was thick with fog. It seemed we were cutting through a sea of dimness, waves and waves of grey mist crashing against our tiny ship. Visibility was poor; the side of the road faded into nothingness. It felt like we were charging headlong into a void, or chasing an endlessly receding wall that we might careen into at any moment.

Dan sped on, undaunted.

•••••

"A guy killed himself at OSU Friday night," Dan announced to no one in particular. The waves of fog swept over us as we hurtled onward. "I was staying at Andy's fraternity and there was one hell of a raging party. We were drinking skippies and I got just shit-faced. Anyhow, we were pretty mellow by three, so we went to bed. I couldn't sleep, though. The guys next door were blasting their stereo too loud. Led Zeppelin coming through the walls. I just lay there for a while, trying to get to sleep, but then I got really pissed. I got up and went outside and pounded on the door."

Suddenly the radar detector began to beep. Dan slowed the car gently to the speed limit. "Better slow down more," suggested Paul. "It's too foggy. They could nail you for violation of the basic rule."

"Fuck," Dan muttered. He slowed to fifty. Soon we drifted past the police car. It seemed like we were sailing past a buoy on a foggy night at sea. Dad took us sailing on the ocean once. It got dark and a storm set in and the boat was tossed about. I was sick the whole time, vomiting into a bucket. Dad spent the whole night at the tiller, keeping the boat as steady as possible. It must've been tough; the swells towered above the tiny boat.

"Like I was saying," resumed Dan, "Zeppelin was coming through the walls. I couldn't sleep. I got up and pounded on the door but there was no answer. So, I climbed into bed and put the pillow over my head. Even with the pillow on my head I could hear the music. 'Going to California.' That's the song that was playing. Then, all

of a sudden people were shouting and banging on doors.

"Andy and me got up and went outside. The music stopped. The room it had been coming from had a bunch of people inside and this guy was lying on the ground and he was dead and there was a belt around his neck. And his face was blue. I'm not shitting you: his face was blue."

Paul and I listened intently as Dan spoke faster and faster. Dan motioned for a Vivarin. I gave him one and he took it dry. It made me sick. I had mine with coke. Paul sat back in his seat. I knew what he was thinking.

Three years ago he tried to kill himself by taking all the pills in his parent's medicine cabinet. Thank God his sister found him, in the middle of the night, face down in the bathroom. His stomach was pumped at the emergency center and then he was sent to the juvenile detention ward at the mental hospital. That was hard on him and it was hard on me. It's not easy to visit your friend at a mental hospital.

We sat quietly, Paul was lost in thought. I turned the heat down. "I want to live forever," Paul said from the back seat. I nodded in agreement.

•••••

The highway began to climb and narrow past Roseburg, and the curves grew sharper. Dan stared intently at the wall of fog. His hands gripped the steering wheel firmly and he kept the car at a steady eighty miles an hour.

Paul and I clung to our seats as we barreled over the winding roads in the fog. My stomach was beginning to get butterflies. Every time Dan took a corner, it felt like the car was going to slip off the

side of the road. Dan seemed to think that he was in complete control, but I thought we were going to die at any moment.

"Shit! This is dangerous!" exclaimed Paul finally. "Slow down a little. Please."

Dan looked at us for a moment and, seeing our tense faces, gave in. "I guess you're right," he said reluctantly. "There've been some nasty wrecks around here." He eased the speed to a mellow fifty. I sensed another story coming. "A few years ago my dad was coming home from surgery in Salem. It was late at night — like this — and there was hardly anyone around. Well, he was following this motorcycle and suddenly it lost control going around a corner.

"My dad slammed on his brakes and ran over to the wreck. The guy on the bike was pretty fucked up. He'd slid about a hundred feet on his side. My dad said that he looked like hamburger. The guy wasn't breathing and he didn't have a pulse."

Paul twisted his face in disgust.

So, my dad did CPR on the guy and got his heart going. But something was wrong with his breathing. So my dad had to do an emergency trachotomy on him. Right there. In the middle of the road."

"Did the guy live?" I asked, fascinated.

"Yeah. My dad saved his life. That's kinda the reason I wanna be a doctor. It'd be cool to be able to save people's lives."

"Like being a god," said Paul.

"Yeah. Sorta," agreed Dan. He pointed. "That's the corner it happened on. " We watched as it sped by.

"Shit," whispered Paul.

•••••

## THE JASON

It was five when we got to Medford. We stopped and got gas at an all-night place and stretched for a few minutes. My bones ached. "We're here. What'll we do now?" asked Dan.

"I dunno," I answered, yawning. I needed another Vivarin.

"Show us the town," suggested Paul. He was beginning to look haggard; his eyes were blood-shot and the color had drained from his cheeks.

We climbed back into the car. "Okay," Dan said, "here's the grand tour of Medford." I offered Paul a Vivarin but he refused again, so I took one myself.

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**We sat quietly, Paul was lost in thought. I turned the heat down. "I want to live forever," Paul said from the back seat. I nodded in agreement.**

---

We spent the next hour driving around the city. Dan pointed out things from his past: the school he and Andy would sneak into at night to play basketball in the pitch black gym; his dad's clinic; the coffee shop where Dana had worked and where he would wait for her until she was finished; the park where he would take her and they would sit and talk and kiss; Andy's house; the only dance club in town; the place they would go to race their cars; and the spot where he had his first accident. He took us all around the city. We were caught up in a world of Dan's memories, suspending our reality and living his past. My tired imagination could see the events

he described vividly. For a time, I could even believe that I had lived his memories.

Finally, Dan took us to his house. It sat on a hill overlooking Medford, down a long gravel road. The house was huge. There was a swimming pool in front and a barn in back. "This must've cost you a fortune," Paul marvelled. "You can tell your dad's a doctor."

Dan smiled. He wasn't quite as enthused. "What now?" he asked. "I don't wanna wake my parents up. I'd have to explain why I'm here. My dad'd be pissed."

"Let's go to California," I said suddenly.

"What?" Paul and Dan said in unison.

"Let's go to California. I've never been there," I explained. "It's not far. Let's go."

Paul shook his head. "It's an hour round-trip," Dan protested. I tried to look hurt. Dan sighed. "But I guess we don't have anything better to do."

•••••

The California border slices through a group of hills. We followed the highway through them. "Let's stop here," I suggested, pointing to a turnout near the top of one of the hills. Dan pulled over.

We got out of the car and climbed the hill. The summit was grassy and wet, but we were too tired to care. We plopped down on our backs and watched the stars. The sky was beautiful. It looked as it must have long before electric lights, before smoke and exhaust: long ago, when the air was clear. The sky stood black and the stars shone bright. There were thousands of them, white and shining and they bled together, creamy white against the blackness of the night. I felt as if I were witnessing the birth of a universe.

## SPRING 1990

Abruptly, Dan sat up. "I've got some pot," he announced. He took a pipe from his pocket. Paul and I looked at each other in surprise. Dan lit the pipe and took a few hits while we watched, then he handed it to me.

I took it apprehensively: I had only tried pot twice and it had made me sick both times. "Go ahead," Dan prodded. I lit the pipe and breathed in slowly, deeply ... feeling the smoke coat my mouth and my throat and holding it burning in my lungs ... holding it ... in my lungs ... and then I coughed uncontrollably. My lungs were on fire!

I passed the pipe to Paul. He shook his head and gave it back.

Catching my breath, I took another hit, breathing it in, tasting the smoke sweetly on my tongue. I let it out slowly, sighing. I handed the pipe to Dan and then lay down again, watching the stars. For a few minutes, I felt as if nothing had happened. Then:

The night went on gently around me. I lay on my back and drifted away, pulled into the sea of stars. I could suddenly see everything ... Dad sailing wildly upon the sea, his hair blown back, wet from the surf ... Mom's face as she screamed at the sudden separation, at the wall that now stood between her and Dad ... Amy far away in Germany, alone in a foreign land, feeling as lost as me.

I lay on my back and drifted. I felt like I'd live forever, the wind as my friend ... and I could hear music: a hymn or a cradle song and all the stars around me were notes and chords. I was a composer who had let a compulsive melody escape from my head to run wild through the night.

I remembered: I was in church the

first time I realized that I had to die. It was a hot summer Sunday morning and the congregation was singing hymns. The men in their suits: hot and sweaty. The women wore brightly colored dresses: cooler than the men, but still uncomfortable.

We were singing and I was feeling good. I was starting high school the next morning. I felt good.

We sang hymns and then the pastor came to the pulpit. His face was grim, but I was feeling good. And he said, quivering, that a girl had just been killed this morning while she was walking to church. Hit by a car. And wasn't it tragic, he cried. She would have started high school the next morning.

I was shocked out of my complacency. My mind went blank; I could not think at all. The singing began again: mournful dirges. Black thoughts crept into my head. I was finally aware of my own mortality. I realized that someday I was going to die.

I can't believe that Dad is gone.

Paul stirred beside me. He said softly, "Sometimes the urge to commit suicide is so strong that it's like a physical thing, pulling me like a magnet towards death." He was crying. "I mean: I love life. But in death there is a sense of completion, of finality. Life can be so absurd, so boring. In death there is no boredom." Paul sobbed softly. I sat up and hugged my knees. Dan dozed beside me.

The sky began to pale and then to take on the deep shades of blue that signal the coming of morning. I watched as the sky changed color time after time until the sun crept above the hills in the distance.

I want to live forever. •

## *The Three Sunrises*

You left me in the evening while my body was still warm.  
On the first morning I bathed in a pool of your sweat  
And I dried myself with sheets of your tormented poetry.  
I ate your cat for breakfast because he would not purr.

On the second morning I brushed my teeth with your perfume  
And washed my face with your socks. I placed an ad for you  
In the classifieds but I got no response.

On the third morning I prayed for you at breakfast  
But you did not return. So I went to church.  
On the way home I climbed atop a lamppost  
And loudly declared my love for you.

I slept with somebody new that night.

## *Good day*

I discovered a dead man in the  
morning, we made love in the  
afternoon. In the night, I  
wrote poetry.

*nightcrawlers*

even while you dimly sleep,  
insects through your eyelids creep:

dark arachnids sidelong spindle  
slipping neatly across your head —  
wiry legs that work and fiddle,  
weaving hair into a living web.

feathery gnats in your nostrils darting  
swarm in silence upon your breath —  
fill your lungs with wings and, parting,  
bring you tremors of a dreamtime death.

with delight, lithe maggots squirming  
nest and fester within your brain —  
burrow and feast, white bodies churning  
chewing nerves while dreams are stained.

insects through your eyelids creep:  
even while you dimly sleep,



*Fatigue*

My mind swarms with bees  
fat, heavy bees  
I think about eternity  
Those little minutes I'm living  
Attaching themselves like granite  
to my soul

---

**M E I**  
**C H I N G**  
**T A N**

*"Listen to stars that  
sing."*



**Untitled**, pencil drawing



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**M A R K  
W A L K E R**

*"Gone fishing."*

*Mullan Pass*

A crazy god, that's who it was.  
Dropped this twisted strand of  
Dirt road and steel rails across  
This mountain. Now —  
They have finally choked each other dry —  
Neither sees much business lately.

Chokeberry bushes and deer don't mind.  
Neither do the thirsty high school kids  
Praising Dionysus, hiding from the sheriff.  
Who might have thought hide-and-seek  
Might come in handy?

Time doesn't fly here, she waltzes. Slowly,  
Leaning with the chill Canadian wind,  
Holding her partner close. A tear  
Slips down her face, wanders  
Through trees, feeds fish. Cows sing,  
Accompanied by John Deere or  
Massey Ferguson, undiscovered talent.

From the top, your eye gives out  
Before the view does. If you listen  
Closely, you'll hear those jittery butterflies  
Over there gossiping. Don't worry.  
It's not about you.  
And every night the moon and  
The stars polish it all to a perfect gloss  
In case there are visitors next day.

*(Continued)*

## THE JASON

I come here because of the soil.  
Rich enough to support that lone  
Forest Service signpost  
Pointing between the cows and  
Across barbed wire to the creek.  
The eddies and the pools chuckle at the sight  
Of my fuzzy hook drifting.  
Fishing for trout in Dog Creek.  
Or is that dog in Trout Creek?  
It doesn't matter.

I brought you with me  
Because as a child I was taught to share.  
The great severe rocks reminded me  
I should — and the whispering strands of cottonwood —  
That I want to.

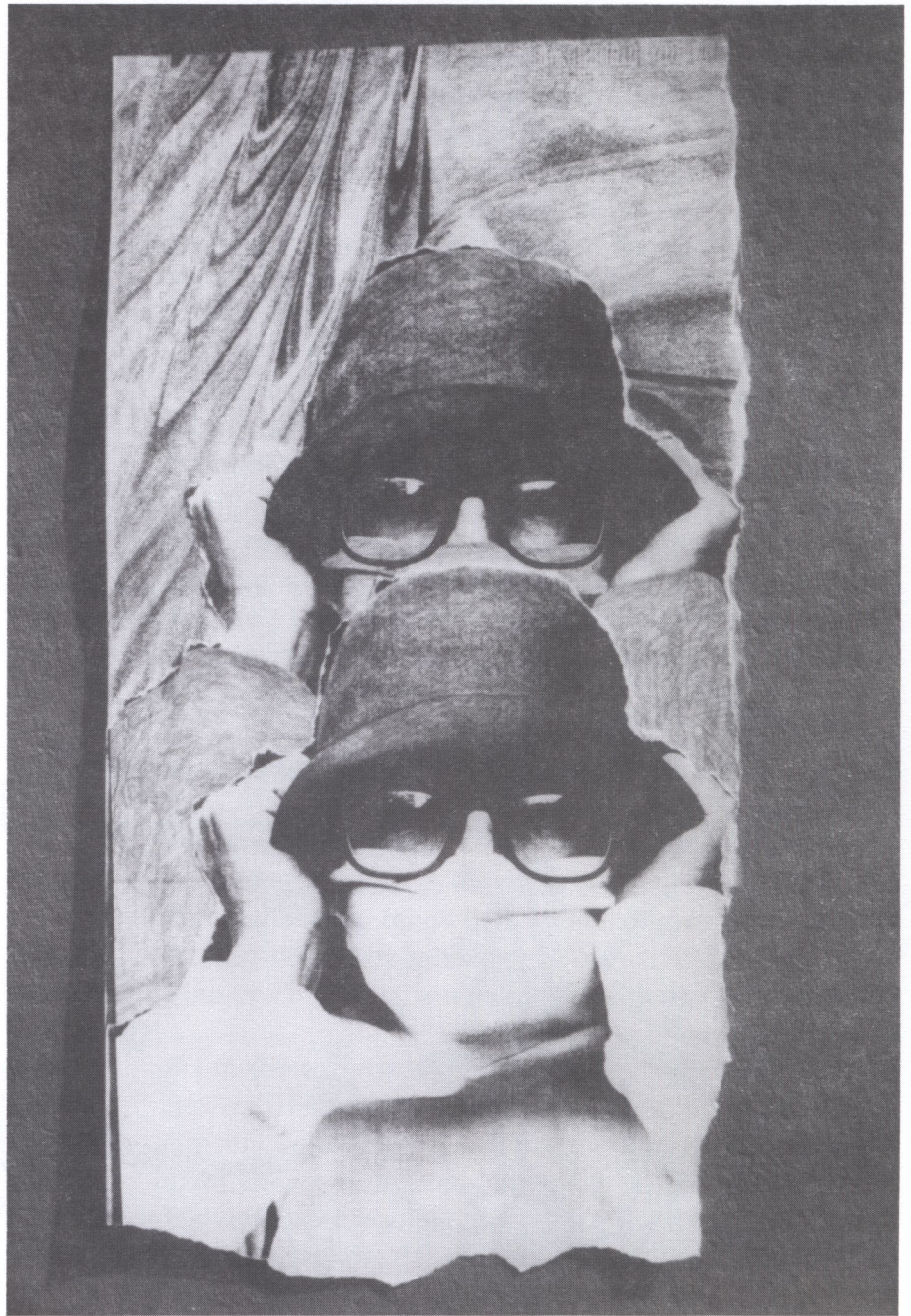




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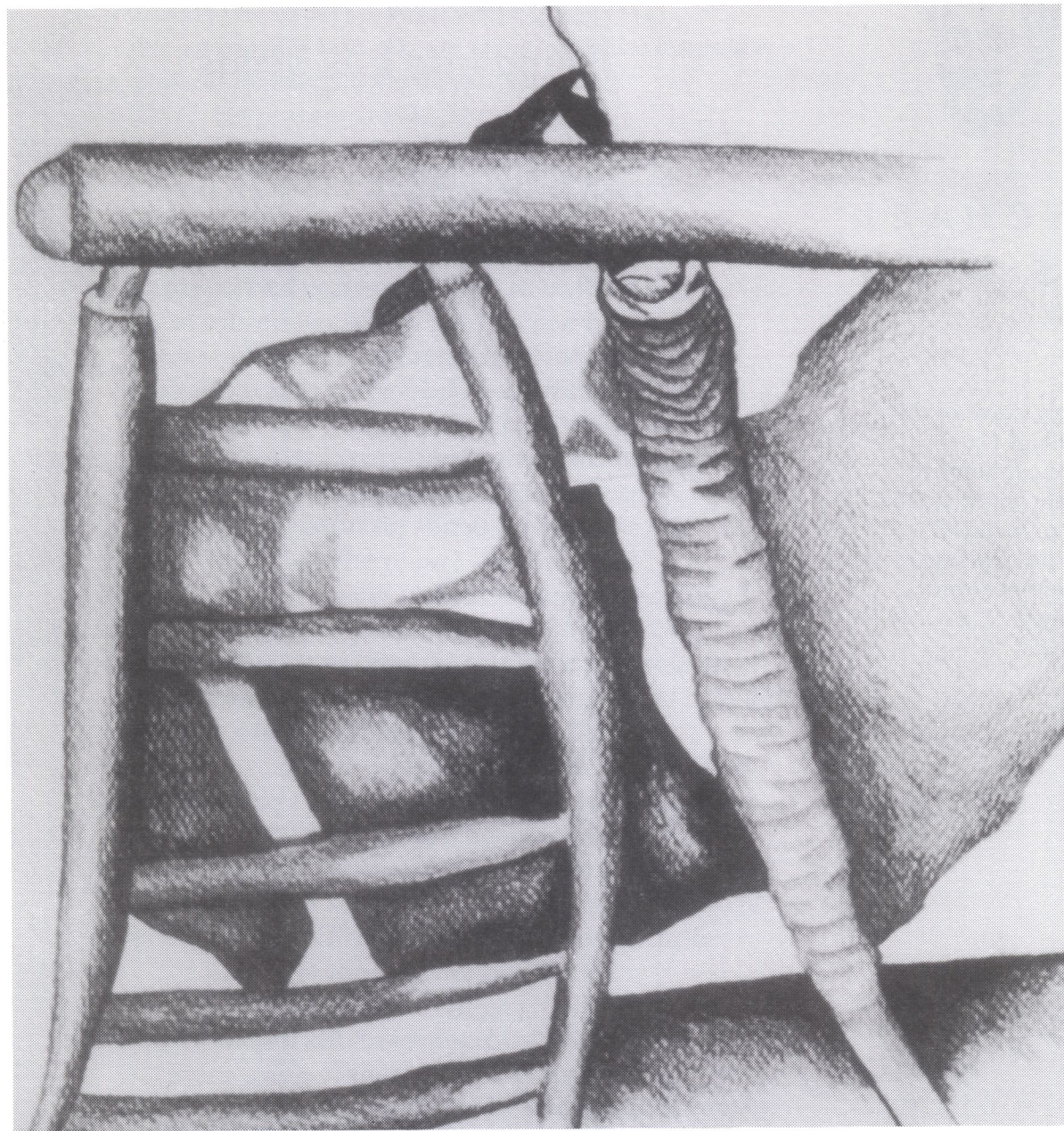
**NICOLE  
KAUTH**

*“Art satisfies my need to create and express myself in a visual form. I believe James Joyce described it perfectly as ‘The esthetic image in the dramatic form is life purified in and reprojected from the human imagination.’”*



**Annie Hall**, mixed media

THE JASON



**Untitled**, charcoal drawing



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**MICHAEL  
ISHII**

"Poetry is one of the few things I can devote a lifetime to. A poem has to strike close to home, in some positive way, with each person who reads it, for it to be good."

*Flying into Las Vegas*

The city below us, flat.  
He reaches beneath his hat  
for a cigarette, says: *I need one to calm me down  
for the flight in.* His voice raspy and interesting  
like old newspaper. Two small bottles of wine  
sit near the armrest, empty, while he reads  
George Eliot and I draw sketches of his face  
in my book. Of people lying sideways over  
empty airline seats. Abstract shapes: triangles, ovals  
perpendicular lines. Hunched over his novel,  
he snuffles and bends his nose.

I think of the people  
who follow the dirt trail to Vegas, to slot machines  
in casinos, hotels . . . even in the men's room  
by the urinal, guaranteed to hold out longer  
than the toilet paper. *Gosh*, he says,  
*The ground's not even below us yet;  
ten-thousand feet and . . .* I don't pay attention.  
He smokes like a loser.  
His pinot noir eyes are sore looking,  
like a gambler's, as if he lost his last dollar  
at the crap tables at three this morning.

Why is he flying into Las Vegas  
with those bankrupt eyes? To lose more money  
at the crap table, somewhere down there  
in that place we are falling into?

Falling, that is,  
sinking like white wine on an empty stomach,  
like pages of Eliot already forgotten.

*(Continued)*

## THE JASON

He says he can't see what we're flying into.  
We're moving fast. *Do you know how quick it would end  
if we hit the side of a building?* he asks.  
*Bam!* He pounds his fist.  
*That fast, brother. That fast.*

### 'ch'

At night she gets ideas,  
races from bed across train tracks  
to the desk, steam building from her engine,  
cigarettes she buries in an ashtray  
run circles around the lamp.

She makes the sound,  
teeth clenched, always dissatisfied  
with what she does:

'ch.' I have to revise this.

'ch.' I can't believe how trite  
my writing gets.

Aesthetics alone  
are not enough — she needs to be  
assured of her coming up  
in the world.

I tell her: There must be more  
than money and fame  
in this thing you call poetry.  
Art with a capital 'P.'  
She makes the sound,  
a Southern Pacific steam engine —  
the clatter of boxcars  
on an old wood bridge,  
through a tunnel so long ears pop midway.

*(Continued)*

This is the way it is  
when she wakes at night.  
Her eyes burn my stomach,  
and 'ch' (like that) I can't go back to sleep.  
I watch the lamp, the trail of smoke from her ashtray,  
remembering trains on the Peasley Canyon bridge.  
At one time we watched them  
together.

### *Windowless*

Windowless like the basement we shared.  
The winter, bookshelf-cold and clinging to us  
the way you woke from bad dreams, always out of breath  
beneath your ton of blankets.

You slept with a broken heater beside you,  
as if it helped. As if anything could.

We were teenagers, and knew certain things to be true:

- It always rains when you're alone at night in a dark room.
- High school was meant for idiots.
- All parents eventually divorce.

That last one stuck in your head,  
and when you woke at night we used to talk  
about how much we wanted to be at home,  
and sleep in the home we had grown up in,  
not in our stepfather's basement,  
windowless like the eyes of a drunk.

We hardly ever saw him; he stayed out till two or three  
every night. To sleep in that house and know the kitchen,  
the rug, the open-beam ceilings, none of it was ours . . .  
We lost sleep, staying up with the television,  
eating leftover donuts and wrapping ourselves in blankets.  
Those old "B" movies were never enough to keep me awake.  
I wrote letters to friends who transferred schools.  
I peeled fruit.

*(Continued)*



*After midnight.*

Fish loose in backwater  
cannot be as free  
as this feeling, lover  
— suspended, held,  
I dreamt of falling  
down a canyon crevice,  
falling with the heaviness  
of sleep in my eyes  
as they search for movement  
in this empty room.

Like fish drifting asleep  
in dark water  
we make love. I always wake  
alone —

the fish tank  
exploding in bubbles of air  
and plastic shrubs.  
My room a clutter  
of plywood shelves  
and unopened boxes  
from when I moved in  
two months ago.

I have a worn blanket I use  
to keep me warm. Not you.  
You are far; I have to fall  
to find you, into the night  
and the river of bass and steelhead  
I hear running  
from my bedroom window.  
We love with our eyes shut,  
and dreaming.



**JULIE  
MUÑIZ**



*"I like to dabble in different things. Photography's just something I pick up from time to time. Mostly, I like to write. I'm always trying to see things in a new way and to express myself from the soul in whatever I do."*

**Portland Historic District, Night, photo**



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**J A M E S  
O S M E R**

*"I try to make my poems ferocious. Each one should be volatile and dangerous in a different way than the previous one. Whatever you think of my work, it is above all, good kindling."*

*Art*

Merriweather Morse  
painted the inside of his fridge  
with lipstick  
and seven shades of eye shadow  
to make a modern day Mona Lisa  
flirting and frigid  
like the girl he married  
but this one will stay  
snaky smooth and smiling  
until we unplug her.

*Underground*

down into the labyrinths the catacombs under  
dripping water pipes the air gets colder  
surrounded by grotesque collages of electrical  
wiring we end up at a fallout shelter  
encased in a metal cage my friend pulls out  
a heavy wool army surplus jacket and models  
it for the walls I warn him about the rats  
he says there are no rats here they're all  
upstairs fighting over the world bits of  
cheese with territorial flags in them but  
here on the wall is written the word proton  
in itself it means nothing.

*Dalí Enters Avalon*

You make the long-legged gypsies  
resting on the steps  
of the Chicago Art Institute  
look much less inviting  
setting giraffes ablaze  
putting elephants on stilts  
the shades of your paint  
are the same as those in my crayon box  
all five hundred flavors

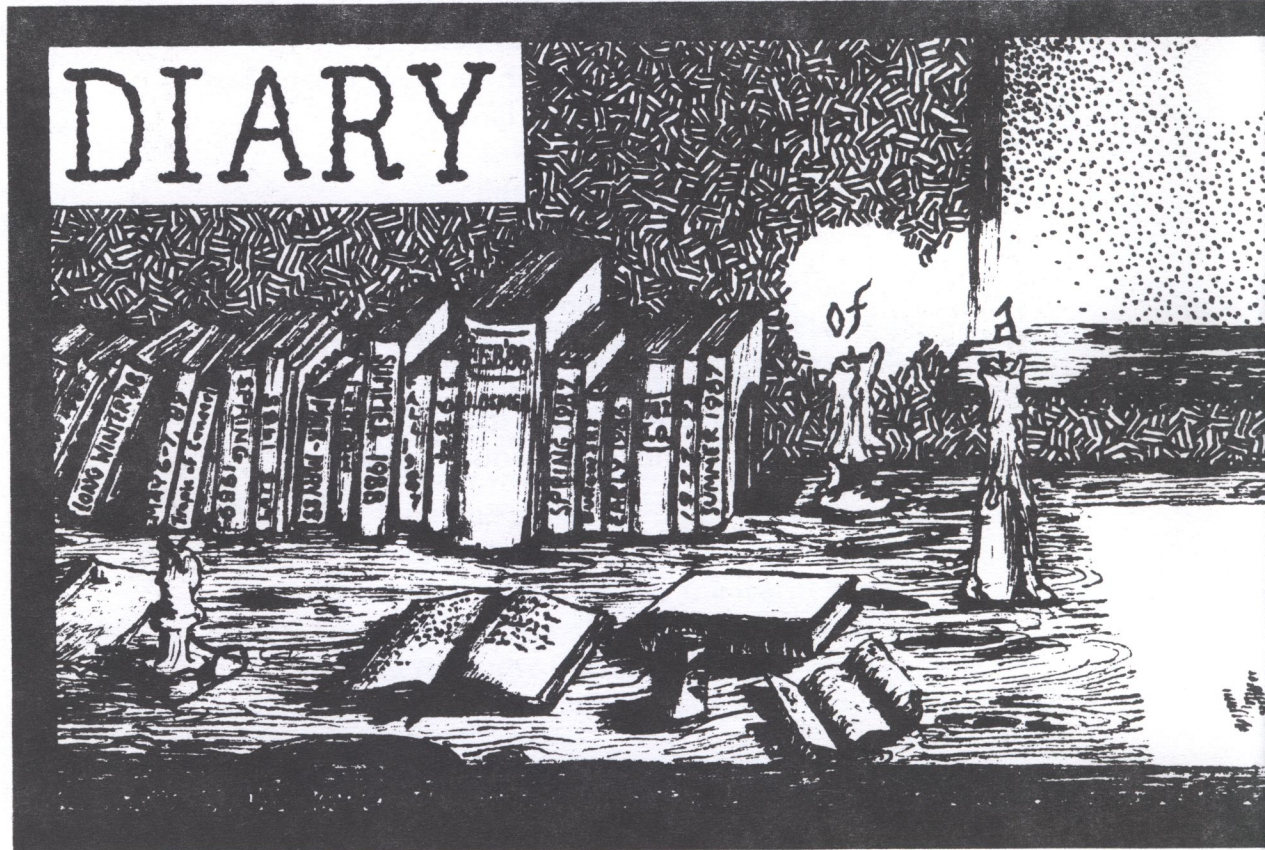
I came here for you  
but there is only a handful  
of your paintings up today  
and since your work has stopped  
and the population of the world  
still increases I suppose  
I'll have to share these  
with the ten million Chinese  
that were born  
while I stared  
at a giraffe on fire.

SPRING 1990

## *Caffeine*

When you hear the big hooves  
pounding outside the door  
don't dare open it climb the wall  
and tape your body to the ceiling

When the floor looks like thousands of crawling insects  
and the walls display paintings of the floor  
don't come down stay up there  
until a man comes to change the lightbulbs

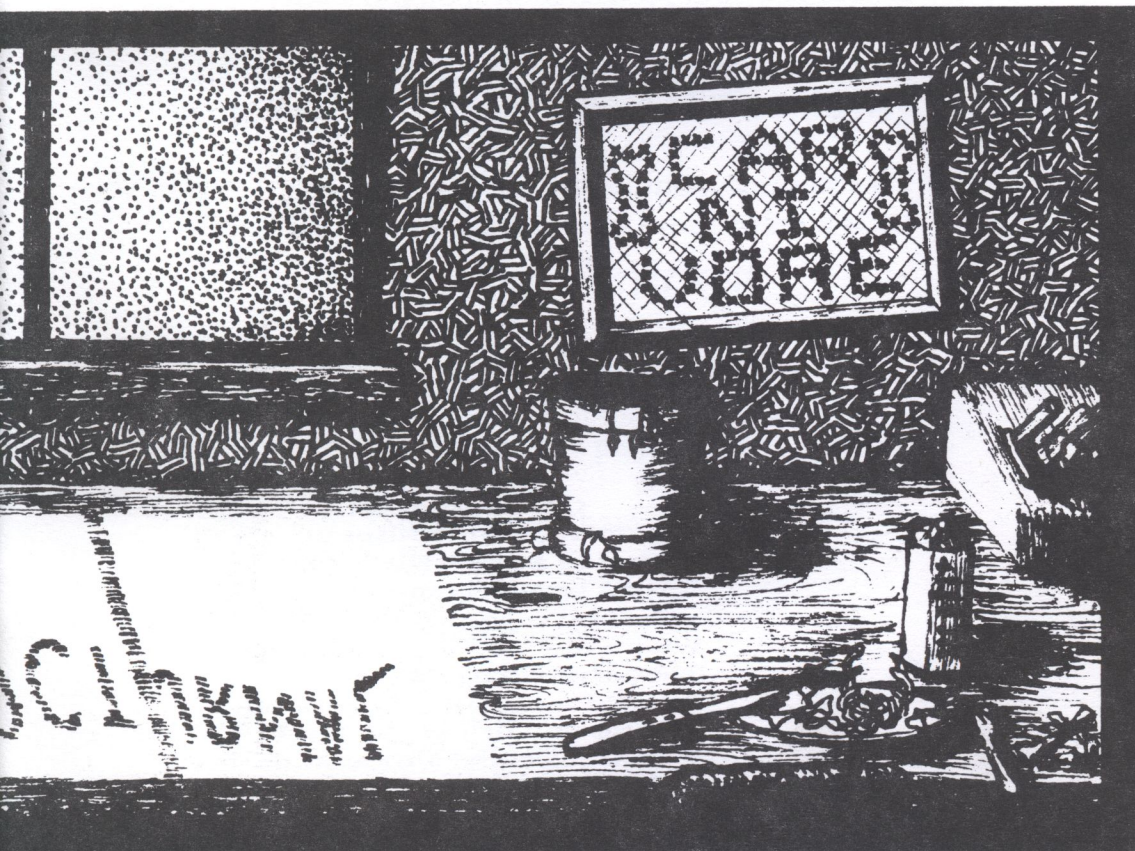




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**KAREN  
McFARLANE**

**Diary of a Nocturnal Carnivore, pen drawing**



*"After eighteen years  
of tornado dreams I  
still loathe relish and  
love darkness. Send  
me back to play  
'Master Dik' just  
once more."*



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**T A R A  
CAMPBELL**

*"Had I written 'To a Curious Heart' while I was in high school, I wouldn't have wanted to share it extensively for fear that someone to whom it did not apply would think I had written it about them; or worse yet, that someone to whom it did apply would discover the same. Now that I am older, were this 'problem' to arise it would not inspire fear so much as a smile."*

## *To a Curious Heart*

Had I the type of mind to understand  
My heart, then to your innocent demand  
To know your state with me, I'd acquiesce;  
But does it gratify you not to guess?

Were we to know concretely, would our eyes  
Still draw us to some unannounced surprise?  
To play with certainty, should not a smile  
Lose power to disarm or to beguile?

Assurance, would you so soon spoil the chase,  
Steal this ardent fever from my face,  
And douse the secret fervor in our touch?  
For, grounded, we should not spark half as much.

Yet you suspect our hearts are best revealed?  
Or is most precious what remains concealed?

## *On God's Green Earth*

Where the  
Golden sunslice  
Pierces white wisps of  
Cloud in a blue skysea; where  
Sienna branches sport emerald  
Leaves and orange breasted birds;  
Where tiny violets people moist  
Brown hills; dark, secretive dirt,  
That hides the sins of a thousand  
Cains and drinks the black,  
Black blood of a thousand,  
Thousand Abels; On God's  
Green Earth.

## Halloween

This is a pumpkin place,  
of snarled vines  
and whisper shapes  
The silent hovering of a full, decked  
moon  
The distant fluttering of a crow, black  
doom  
Winds a-howling,  
gasping, free,  
Leaves a-crunching,  
flying, flee.  
Spicéd air, frosted plain  
Restless stirrings of a night insane.

## The Tempest

Shhhhhh, my soul,  
Let it come.  
In torrents of pain  
Let it pour,  
In heaps of chain  
Let it bind.  
It will not win.  
Throw it away.  
Stand bare to the sun, sky, wind,  
And sands,  
Lear has paved the way.  
The tempest within hast taken all sense  
And we'll meet the bear i' th' mouth.



**B R I A N  
M O S T O L L E R**

*"Many people live their lives hoping that the future has the key to their happiness. Well, the future does have the key and he does open doors, but many people pass him by because he greets them disguised as the present."*



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**R O L A N D  
F L I N T**

*Roland Flint, poet and professor from Georgetown University, was Poet in Residence at Willamette University in February and March 1990. His most recent book is "Stubborn," printed by University of Illinois Press.*

*But to Pigeon Hosting Poets, Zimmer*

Is another story, paying his own parking,  
Offering hard cash at lunch (which pigeon's  
Boss *is* paying for), bringing along his wife  
So not assuming his fee includes  
All the sophomores he can eat & reading  
To the minute what pigeon asked him to  
Considerate also of the limey  
(Who insists on reading last),  
Charming pigeon's & every ear  
(Excepting maybe the limey's) who hear  
The simple complicated songs,  
Beer-belly magic waving its wand —  
Ah, the jampacked room was Zimmer when he started  
Zimmer when he stopped  
And even as the limey read  
The room was solid Zimmer.  
Twice now pigeon hosting Zimmer  
Has stuck him with a poet  
Who blows louder longer but is dimmer  
And he swears, by God, next time he will atone  
By having immer Zimmer read (2 hours) alone.

*Pigeon Remembers Abruptly*

Six or seven years after their split,  
And with deep if complicated pleasure,  
How in all his life only she has called him "Dear,"  
An old fashioned way in itself to endear.  
It must have started before the early  
Trouble, &, no doubt, after a while, mere habit,  
But he is moved to remember, even so,  
Through much of it, she called him "Dear,"  
And hopes he *was*, sometimes at least, to her  
As she is to him this morning, very dear.

*When Her Digital Clock*

Says 5:55 pigeon knows it's time &  
So on Thanksgiving morning he is up,  
Appropriately thankful to be  
Scratching in his pigeon book on this one,  
Old ones, older & older ones:  
Something in them still calls him  
Out of bed & brings him along.  
One thing not to give thanks for is,  
Sixteen years ago today, the young  
President's death in Dallas &  
All the train of griefs it pulled,  
Martin, Bobby, Malcolm & Medger,  
Viet Nam & LBJ (who actually said,  
Of the war-protesters, "Forgive them, Lord,  
For they know not what they do") & also  
Watergate & that other one  
P won't let into his song at all,  
Except (for rhyme) right here — milhous,  
The charmless, witless, sexless louse.  
Well — despite carps backward & abysms —  
Pigeon *is* giving thanks today: for  
The living children, surviving love,  
For pages up there on which to write,  
For the fat bird in the oven,  
For the slender one in his bed,  
For all the days with her ahead,  
For whatever else it is at 5:55  
That gets him up to scratch  
The thanking day alive.



*Mother's Soup*

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A L I C E  
M A H

*"I like frogs."*

She laughs  
    like an onion peels  
in layers of loose,  
yellowing skin

                    And as I  
watch, the raw flesh slips  
off her skinny fingers and her  
fowls' bones are broth base

boiling out nutrients  
    Her palms are like pistols  
scattering round onions over thickening  
soup, mixing vegetable with animal

                    She smiles  
as though she enjoys the meat  
of our conversation but  
soup absorbs her sallow skin

                    in a ceramic stock pot  
The soup steams up in wisps  
the odors of melting onions and  
salted base. She laughs

                    empty as an onion's ring.

THE JASON



**Red Leg**, woodcut



**MACHI  
TAWARA**

*Machi Tawara is a contemporary Japanese poet whose tanka (short form of Japanese poetry similar to haiku) deal mainly with the subject of relationships. These poems are from one section of "Salad Anniversary," published in Japan in 1987. Translations are by Michael Ishii.*

サラダ記念日

陽のあたる壁にもたれて座りおり  
平行線の吾と君の足

捨てるかもしれぬ写真を何枚も  
真面目に撮っている九十九里

まだあるか信じたいもの欲しいもの  
砂地に並んで寝そべっている

オレンジの空の真下の九十九理  
モノクロームの君に寄り添う

寄せ返す波のしぐさの優しさに  
いつ言われてもいいさようなら

*From "Salad Anniversary"*  
Sitting down, leaned against this wall  
in the sun, our legs — yours and mine — make  
parallel lines

The somber way you snap picture after picture  
of Kujukuri Beach — they may all end up  
lost

Lying side by side on the beach, I wonder if there  
could be more — could there be anything else  
we want to believe in?

The orange sky, and Kujukuri directly below —  
I draw close to you in the monochrome  
dusk

The elegant gesture of the waves returning —  
it would not even matter if I was told  
goodbye.

## *I Wish You Would*

I went to a wedding last Saturday. Two of my closest and oldest friends were married that day. The bride, oh man, was she ever beautiful in her gown. The ceremony, the reception afterward ... just perfect. And it was all so ... I don't know. Out of place.

I felt dazed throughout it all—I'd done some heavy drinking the night before. Very heavy, actually. Whoever I was with had to pour me over my front doorstep, and I awoke about an hour before the wedding, fully clothed and soaking wet in the bathtub. And alone. I've got to tell you I'm not much for drinking, not usually. But at the time I didn't know what else to do. I needed to forget.

I recall someone laughing and saying I'd probably burst into flames if I entered a church, a Catholic one no less. I replied that the choice of imagery was too strong for my brand of evil. On Saturday morning I entered the chapel, only dazed, not in flames. The ceremony had already begun. I introduced myself to the usher, whom I'd known for two or three years, actually. When in fog it's hard to recognize the familiar.

I signed my name in the book, using a different signature. I laid the card down among the others on the table. I must confess I'd bought it at random—I was running late, remember. Hell, if I would've known, I'd have bought a gift. But I suppose I hadn't been socialized properly.

God, why did I feel as though someone had died?

The usher asked me which family I was with, the bride's or the groom's. I'm a friend of both, I said. Oh. Yes. Well, which side would you like to sit with—right or left? I said I had no idea. I could tell he didn't know where to put me, either.

How about the right? Sure, fine. The usher led me to a place beside someone else I knew, someone I was a little surprised to see there. George. Old roommate of the groom's and mine. I nudged him. He looked up, smiled, sort of, and moved over one. I sat down. We shook hands.

How're things going with Nat? was the first thing George said. A strange way to ask how I was doing, one which I wished he hadn't used.

Great. Really great, I told him.

Natalie was 18. Barely. Yes, she was a little young, but I was a weak person, one who never wanted any deep contact. Only pleasure, and



**KASSTEN  
ALONSO**

*"I seek experience so as to write. I write so as to remember and to make sense of experience. Each fuels the other; both drive me to who I am."*

beauty, and Natalie was young and beautiful and wonderfully superficial. And more than a little promiscuous.

Sure, that bothered me at times — the fact that I wasn't the only one she slept with. I had an overblown sense of myself, just like everyone else. But this petty egoism was transcended by, in my mind, a choice between the lesser of two evils. A faithless, immature girlfriend, or a wife ... a Wife. I'm afraid I've put my worst foot forward. I'm sorry. I don't want to be the heavy, however heavy a person as weak as myself can be. It was just ... Nat's failure fit so well with mine, with my lifestyle. With what I wanted and didn't want. Perhaps her age didn't make much difference, but then again, it may have been what maintained our relationship. I didn't know at this point. I hadn't had the chance to think it out, and to be honest, I didn't really want to.

I asked George how he'd been lately. George had had a breakdown a while ago, when we all were still roommates. He'd had two, actually. The first time he tried to choke his girlfriend to death. He'd been working these godawful 60 and 70 hour weeks and was trying to make payments on a car, a truck and a speed boat. He simply ran himself into the ground and, on the way down, wrapped his fingers around his girlfriend's throat. It took three of us to pull him off. And she'd only asked him why he got home so late that day.

I've seen it happen before. I mean, people working themselves into the dirt. I imagine that's one reason why I'm so lazy. The weight of mundane reality would drive me under as well.

Natalie was no more into reality than I was.

A very social girl, she liked to go to parties, go dancing, get fucked up. Get fucked. Her words, not mine.

Like me, she wanted a life composed only of beauty and pleasure. Pain and responsibility were to be escaped from. But, despite her shallowness, Nat could be very honest about things. Perhaps brutally so. More than once she'd left with someone else from a party I'd taken her to. It was simply what she wanted to do, and she saw no reason not to. I never minded much. I'd usually find another girl. Besides, I knew Nat would be back. I'm the only one who ever listens to her.

The second time George lost it, about a month ago, he'd been driving a logging truck, working for his father. George pulled into some nothing town and called up his dad, crying. He said, "I can't make it, Dad." The old man wouldn't hear anything about it. He said, "Pull your ass together, goddammit! Stop being such a damn baby. Pull your ass together and deliver that timber!"

Next I heard, George had begun going to those meetings. For drinkers. I wasn't sure if he was still going. I did know he was drunk at the wedding, though.

My semi-girlfriend, 18-year-old Natalie what's-her-face, was quite the drinker herself. She'd come over whining and begging until I went and bought her more alcohol than I'd drink in *my* lifetime. Then we'd get back to my place and she'd start drinking. Or drowning. I might have one or two, no more. My pleasure is severely constricted by pollutants, you understand. Nat, however, wouldn't stop drinking until every bottle or can was empty. I imagine she was what is called a prime candidate. One might say I was her enabler, but that's a crock of shit. I wasn't her guardian. It was understood that I wouldn't try to judge or run her life. Neither of us wanted the hassle. And that rule worked well

## THE JASON

for us. For a while. But Friday morning, Nat threw it all into a different light.

I felt confused. This was one of those traditional, High Mass Catholic weddings, about which I knew nothing. Not a thing. My two old friends seemed quite natural up there, however. This was an area of their lives I never heard much about. I was always of the mind that I knew them very well, but this was something else. The ceremony was beautiful. It was alien.

**I've seen it happen before. I mean, people working themselves into the dirt. I imagine that's one reason why I'm so lazy. The weight of mundane reality would drive me under as well.**

At one point, the priest — or the celebrant, I guess he was called — asked everyone to stand and join hands in a moment of devoted prayer for the bride and groom. Some collective symbol of good will and fidelity, perhaps. All George and I knew was that we were standing separate from everyone else.

I guess it would look kinda strange, he said.

Yeah, it would, I said. I really hated church.

I tried to read my program, but it made me nauseous. I closed my eyes a moment. Man, did I have a lot to drink the night before. But despite all I'd drank, I just couldn't forget what happened Friday morning.

Nat and I had slept until very late, more like early afternoon than morning. It was a great day

to wake up to. Fall ... the best season, for me. Very aesthetic, and vulnerably sensual. I felt especially good as I didn't have much of a hangover. And I had this warm, young body holding onto me. All I needed was a cigarette, right?

I began shaking the bed so Nat would wake up.

"How'd you sleep?" I said, pulling her face to mine.

"Need to pee," she said. I shook the bed some more. I breathed in the scent of her hair, her skin. So good. Her fingertips caressed my hipbone.

George elbowed me. Say, the bride's old man's lookin' in pretty good shape, huh? he said. I looked up to see the bride's father going before the altar. To say a few words. He *was* looking a lot better, alright — could speak clearly and walk a straight line, even. He was a drinker, always would be. He'd just been discharged from one of those in-patient centers. Just in time for his favorite daughter's wedding.

I remember seeing him at a restaurant last summer. I was there with a few friends, and at one point I looked across the room. I saw him sitting there, alone. When my friends and I were leaving, I made a move toward his table. Just to say hello. But he turned his head to look out the window. Oh, he saw me alright, but apparently he wasn't about to forgive or forget my "corrupting" his daughter. "Whatever keeps you going," I said to him in the restaurant.

The celebrant told us to wish each other good will and happiness, for now and in the future. People circulated among each other, laughing, touching. George and I just stood there. I couldn't help but laugh at the man's voice, it was so bass and operatic. The kind of voice I sing

with when I'm joking and drunk. So I laughed. I leaned toward George and said, I don't think I know this tune. Then a tall woman came over to us, said something. I didn't bother to listen. Natalie had caught my eye from where she was up front. She smiled and waved, a young, silly girl. Damn.

"Will you get there early, so I can talk with you before the wedding?" Natalie asked me the morning before.

"Sure, I'll try to," I said.

"At least get there on time, so you can see me do my bridesmaid stuff, okay? Please?" Nat said. I turned my head and bit her neck, making her squeal. We lay like that, wrapped together in my bed, just talking for an hour or so. In the quiet gloom.

"How about you see me do *my* bridesmaid stuff," I said. Yes, it was very silent and dusky in my room.

Nat started up with her giggling. It stirred the silence like ripples across pondwater.

The speaker system let out a horrendous shriek on the duet's next song. But the charming couple kept right on singing and playing. George said he thought they'd only been lip synching the lyrics. I said I really couldn't tell. I didn't really know much about anything at the moment. Particularly Natalie.

It was time to accept the eucharist. People, Natalie, began lining up for flesh and blood. George and I stayed put. Then I asked him if he was seeing anyone lately — just curious. George kept watching the people, I noticed his fists were clenched and pale, similar to his face. Then he said, no, I ain't. He got up without saying any-

thing else and went to go stand in line. I looked down at my all-knowing program. Natalie and the bride's two other sisters were listed as bridesmaids. The youngest sister, only six, was a flower girl.

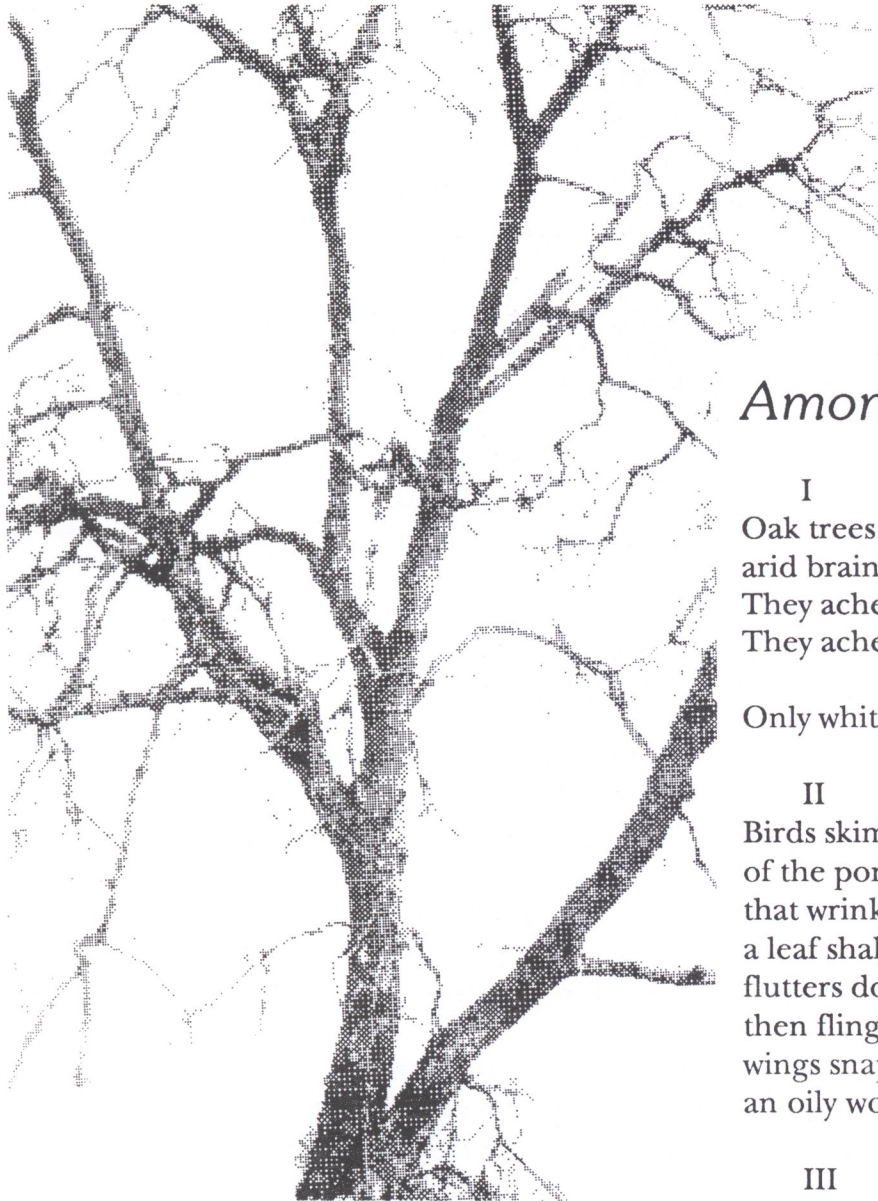
Nat and I drifted repeatedly in and out of sleep. Such a relaxed fall afternoon. Then we drifted into awake and we were kissing, caressing. And it was so quiet when I rolled on top of her. And it was even more quiet when she pressed her mouth against my ear, and even my heels felt her breathe, "I wish you'd get me pregnant." For some reason I looked behind me.

A couple of friends were standing near the back of the pew, filming the wedding. I got up and walked back to them. Hey guys, I said. I then realized they were stoned. I began to wonder how many people were fogged out at the wedding. Bride and groom? I really felt confused.

I remember I raised myself up so I could look at Nat's face. See if she was joking about what she said. But her eyes were closed. "I'm sterile," I said, and laughed, but Nat still wouldn't look at me. Christ.

The musicians began playing the closing song. Husband and wife began marching back up the aisle, together. They looked ecstatic and vital. They looked ... whole. Real. I couldn't believe how beautiful, how radiant, she was. The betrothed came nearer. And nearer. One of my friends was still filming. He didn't seem to notice anything.

I had to sit down. God, did I wish I had a handkerchief. I was sweating very badly. I felt like a criminal.



Dawn Pattison

## *Among Autumn*

### I

Oak trees in November,  
arid brains of old men's skulls.  
They ache from the wind.  
They ache toward renewal.

Only white sky.

### II

Birds skim the skin  
of the pond, winging incisions  
that wrinkle and disappear;  
a leaf shakes loose its branch,  
flutters down, down,  
then flings itself to the air,  
wings snapping, beak grasping  
an oily worm.

### III

Your pale thighs, waters  
warmly undulant, caressing.  
I drift between your thighs.  
I dream between them. I am the trees.

I ache for renewal.

## *You, Cheetah*

Up there on the grassless hill you  
Are a sculpture made of Nairobi sand;  
Nostrils tremble, moist black wings.

From the inner corners of your gold-floored eyes  
Trail two blackened scars burned by the  
Tears of the hunt, the chase,

The fire of those tears streaming into your  
Mouth, past thin black lips drawn against  
Teeth that squeeze, suffocate, rip, drink.

It is the chase you were designed for, more so  
Than the kill, it is to run zebra down  
At 70 miles per hour that your head

Was sculpted small and round, the spotted frame  
Carved and curved like the greyhound's,  
The wind tunnels of the nose and throat, the lungs,

Sucking the air in hot, snorting mouthfuls,  
Thrusting it out as the tail thrusts,  
A rudder, right, center, left right center.

It is because of the chase that you are small,  
Your strength lies in speed, not power, your retractless  
claws are blunt as molars from the tight rope act

Of your run, the twist, the lunge, the  
Dig! Dig! Dig! after the pumping haunches of  
The prey bawling in fear, the prey pulled near and near.

The one you want has dipped its head;  
Your forepaws yank you into the air, and —  
Your slender grace, oh how it can horrify.

*Crush*

My friend and I met  
and we talked about death  
as though it were another  
boyfriend, or another class  
one of us was taking. She said "I  
could never kill myself"  
but I knew how easy  
it could be to slip the car  
off the road or slip the blade  
down the arm or slip onto a  
motorcycle without a helmet or sunglasses.  
I used to do it weekly with a guy  
I knew who drove us reckless afternoons  
up and down the Yucaipa Valley  
leaning into the curves and dips  
of the road, I clung to his back  
and I felt invincible. I opened myself  
up wide to fate, to death, wondering  
will it be now or now or now  
and eating dinner when I returned as if  
I'd gone for a two-day hike and each  
bite was simply more life coursing into my blood.  
When I got my periods I often stared at the  
stains, would I bleed to death, sometimes  
a trickle down my thigh in the shower  
was startling, then the way it fanned out  
at the knee and the same thing shaving,  
the clumsy bite of the blade on the shin, the blood  
fanned out at the ankle and rinsed away.  
I knew a girl whose brother  
died, when we were all in high school, he



---

**KRISTIN  
BECKER**

*Kristin is an English  
major exploring  
England this semester.*

*(Continued)*

## SPRING 1990

turned his motorcycle through a fence and into  
a telephone pole in a field, and they say he  
hit the ground so hard his ribs  
came out, through the skin, and there was his heart  
in the open night air, red and blue and purple.  
That year too I was invincible, my skin stretching  
over the new curves of my hips and waist  
and over my knees which had finally stopped  
aching from growth, I moved  
from the hips and the spine, all my ribs  
were sufficiently covered and I was newly  
sexual, every stab a little lament,  
every condom the cause of some small death,  
I received it as deeply as I could,  
my own unbreakableness  
amazed me.

### *Wash*

She likes to see her boots  
in the windows we pass  
so she takes bigger steps  
until we get to one and then  
it's little steps with higher knees.  
I said:  
Glass doors coming up  
on the left, and  
she pranced she danced she  
kicked her waffleprint filly heels  
and rain flew up in arcs and sprays.

I thank her parents for her face.

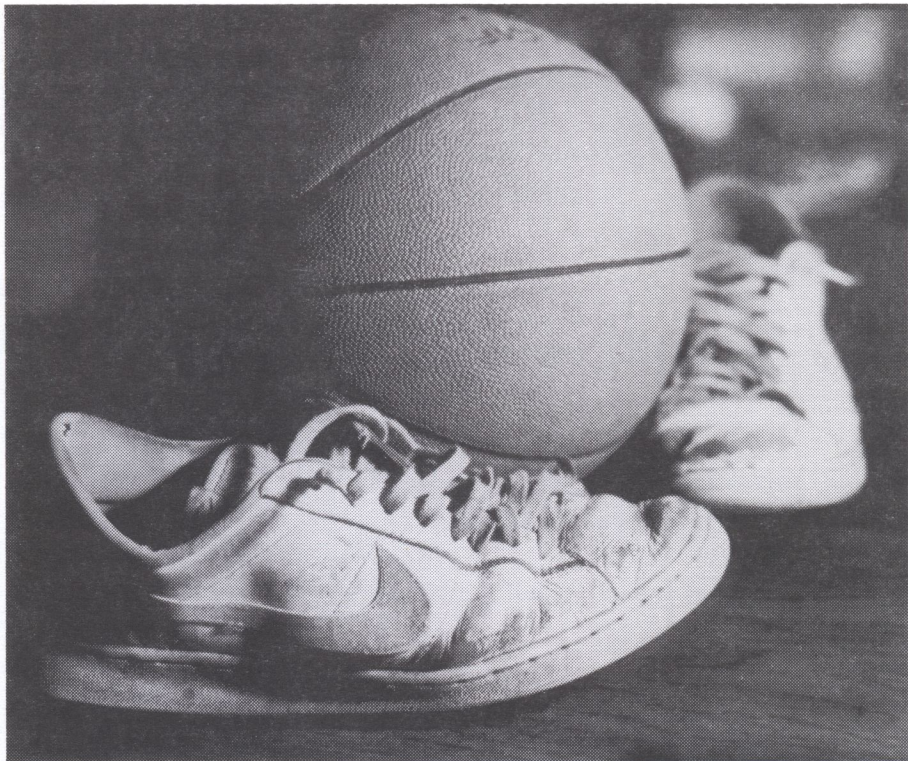
## THE JASON

### *Push*

man  
how i love them  
in Jeeps in baseball pants  
varied forms i love  
to look at them  
and to touch can sometimes be delightful  
in pickup games of basketball  
(i'm short but have good legs  
and i can pass it  
quick hard fast and i  
don't mind the push)

one night i slipped late  
into the room they slept in  
beds stacked and lined in 2 rows  
i breathed deep the sounds  
of their breathing  
the in and out of it  
like familiar dancing  
(inhaling and exhaling  
that's one of the big ones  
i mean you've got  
to keep doing that)

gentlemen gentlemen  
i whispered your names  
David Matthew Jason Joseph  
Christopher Michael William James



Shawn Rodgers



---

**K R I S  
G A T E S**

"I wish to be  
quoteless."

## *Picking Up the Bagels*

I walked into the Greyhound station  
and there I saw Napoleon  
and Marilyn Monroe  
and Eleanor, oh Eleanor Roosevelt,  
alone on her cushion in a corner  
surrounded by her bags.  
I watched Albert Einstein buy a pack of Camels  
and smoke one with the  
practised speed of light.  
And I listened to Shakespeare as he carved his  
sonnets  
in the wooden slats of a bench  
and recited his favorite lines  
to the dozing Laurence Olivier beside him.  
In the ticket line stood teenage Columbus,  
bound for glory with his duffel bag  
and a tattered copy of the buses' routes.  
His two eyes mirrored sockets  
sat General Patton encased in Army green  
wrinkles,  
and his combat from the welfare lines.  
John Wayne  
Joan of Arc  
and Edgar Allen Poe  
stood lined for the use of the telephone booth  
that swallowed them one by one  
And I noticed Cleopatra;  
she reclined on the tile  
with sags framing her kohl black eyes,  
her fingers red and worn by that  
dreary work of slaves.

*(Continued)*

## THE JASON



Michael Ishii

A time-wizened Gandhi uttered peaceful protest  
as the departing bus enveloped him in dust  
and went on reading on the curb.  
Is that you Socrates, sitting by the doorway,  
sipping hemlock from your  
brown-bagged goblet there?  
For in this station, I am Sylvia Plath,  
and I write mystic ruminations and  
condemn myself to death.  
Paul Bunyan at the vending machine,  
will you for me, will you swing your  
mighty axe?

### *Spare Change*

He knows when she works  
and deliberates over his order  
so that she will stand and look at him  
expectantly.  
He sits with his back toward her  
disinterested  
and speaks in an overloud voice  
with extravagant gestures  
of his bright yellow sweatshirt  
so that she will be sure to catch the gist  
of his lawful conversation.  
She will flip her hair  
and scrub busily at nothing with her ragged rag  
to keep her hands from flying to her hips.  
And she pours his coffee with infinite grace.



---

**M A R C I A  
L A T T A**

*"Sometimes I just  
like to appreciate  
something for the  
art of it instead of  
ruining it by looking  
too closely."*

*Blind*

You asked me what I saw when I looked into your eyes  
But I didn't feel like talking to you.

So I went to brush my teeth  
But even then I was thinking about your eyes.  
I told you I saw deep brown — dark enough to blur the line  
between the black pupil and the iris —  
And I saw little red lines in the white part.  
But I knew that wasn't what you meant.

I don't know why I couldn't tell you  
That you have beautiful eyes  
And that sometimes when I look into them,  
I think I can almost see you.

*What's Done Is Done*

Lady Macbeth said perfume couldn't cleanse her hands.  
She was right.

I have some perfumed body powder that smells like flowers  
and it doesn't work either.

But my crime was not so great.

THE JASON



**Boats, photo**



**M I K E  
N O E L**

*"I was born on my birthday, so they say, and have been living ever since. Then someone told me that last year at this time was exactly one year ago, and tomorrow is 24 hours from now. But I know that when I'm gone I won't be here. Alas, that will happen when it does."*

*An <sup>serious</sup> Ode to Moonlight*

Hark! I see you through the dark,  
Sitting on the bark, in the park;  
Moonbeams bouncing off your head.  
They splash on your shoulder,  
Knocking off the mold there;  
The rest, they sprinkle in your ear.

Hark! I see a lark through the dark,  
Flying o'er the bark, in the park;  
Moonbeams bouncing off its head.  
They splash on his beak,  
Wiggling its feet;  
The rest, they sprinkle in your ear.

Hark! I see a shark through the dark,  
Swimming on the bark, in the park;  
Moonbeams bouncing off its head.  
They splash on his fin,  
He winks with a grin;  
The rest, they sprinkle in your ear.

Hark! I see an aardvark through the dark,  
Walking on the bark, in the park;  
Moonbeams bouncing off its head.  
They splash on his tail,  
Wrinkling his mail;  
The rest, they sprinkle in your ear.

Hark! I see you through the dark,  
Sitting on the bark, in the park,  
With your finger in your ear.



---

**B E R N I E  
D E A Z L E Y**

*"When I grow up I  
want to be a kid  
again."*

**My cousin, photo**

SPRING 1990



Self Portrait 1, photo

THE JASON



**Untitled**, photo



## *His Open Fingers*

Rob Leadon was my dad's partner.  
He had a wife and a small boy.

I was coming out of our  
bathroom and he was over  
for dinner. I was a child.  
I stood on the stool and bent  
over the sink. He asked me if  
I knew what to do.  
He took my hands in his and  
showed me  
to get them wet and then  
to apply the soap and then  
to place my palms together and rub.

---

**D A N  
P E T E R S**

*"Yet why not say  
what happened?"*

*(Lowell)*

*"Everything. It  
happens to every-  
thing." (Anna*

*Kovacevic, age 5)*

Rob Leadon split with his wife.  
Rob Leadon stopped doing  
the things he had done.  
Rob Leadon stopped coming over for dinner.

Rob Leadon was driving to  
Seattle, in his soot grey BMW on the Canyon Road.  
Rob Leadon fell  
asleep.

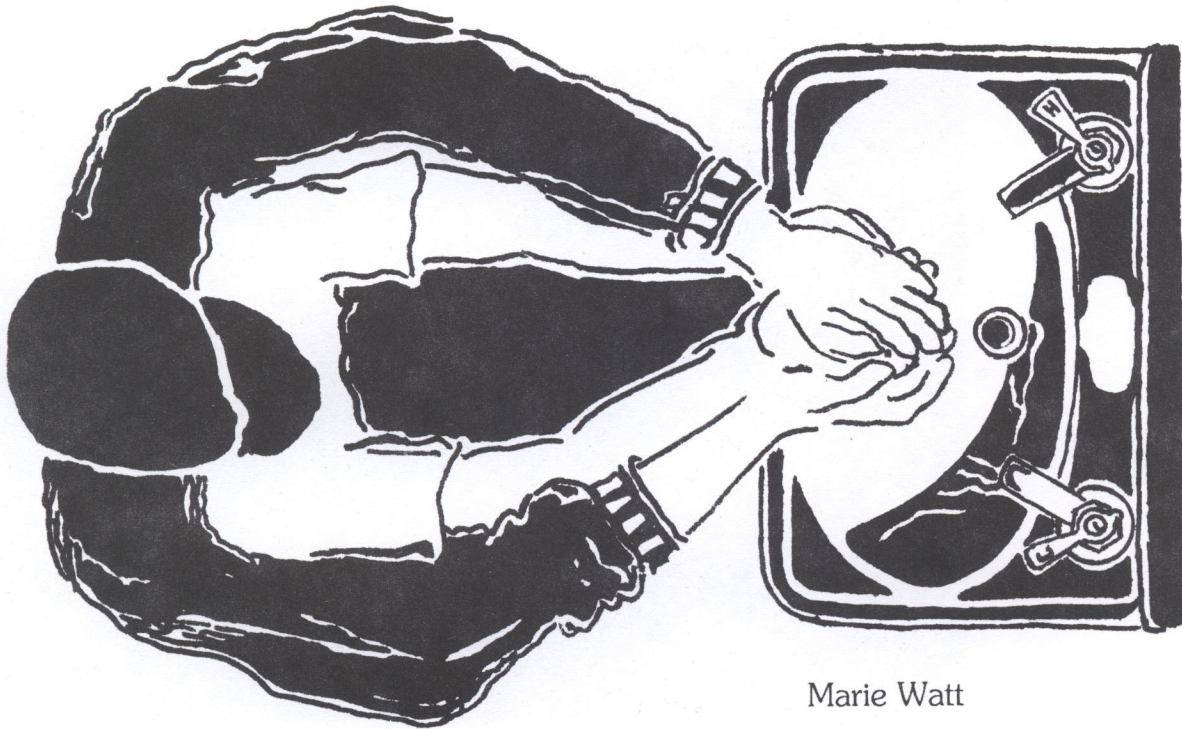
He held my hands in his and moved them  
under the water. And Rob Leadon's car twisted  
and shrivelled and wrung and  
found the early morning coolness  
of the Yakima River. And he showed me  
to rinse them off. And the water moved  
around the broken glass,  
the puckered metal,

*(Continued)*

# THE JASON

filled Rob Leadon's slack mouth,  
suspended Rob Leadon's hair,  
bathed Rob Leadon's staring eyes,  
passed through his open fingers.  
And he showed me to dry them.

I got down from the white  
stool and he, Rob Leadon, and I,  
went to the table.



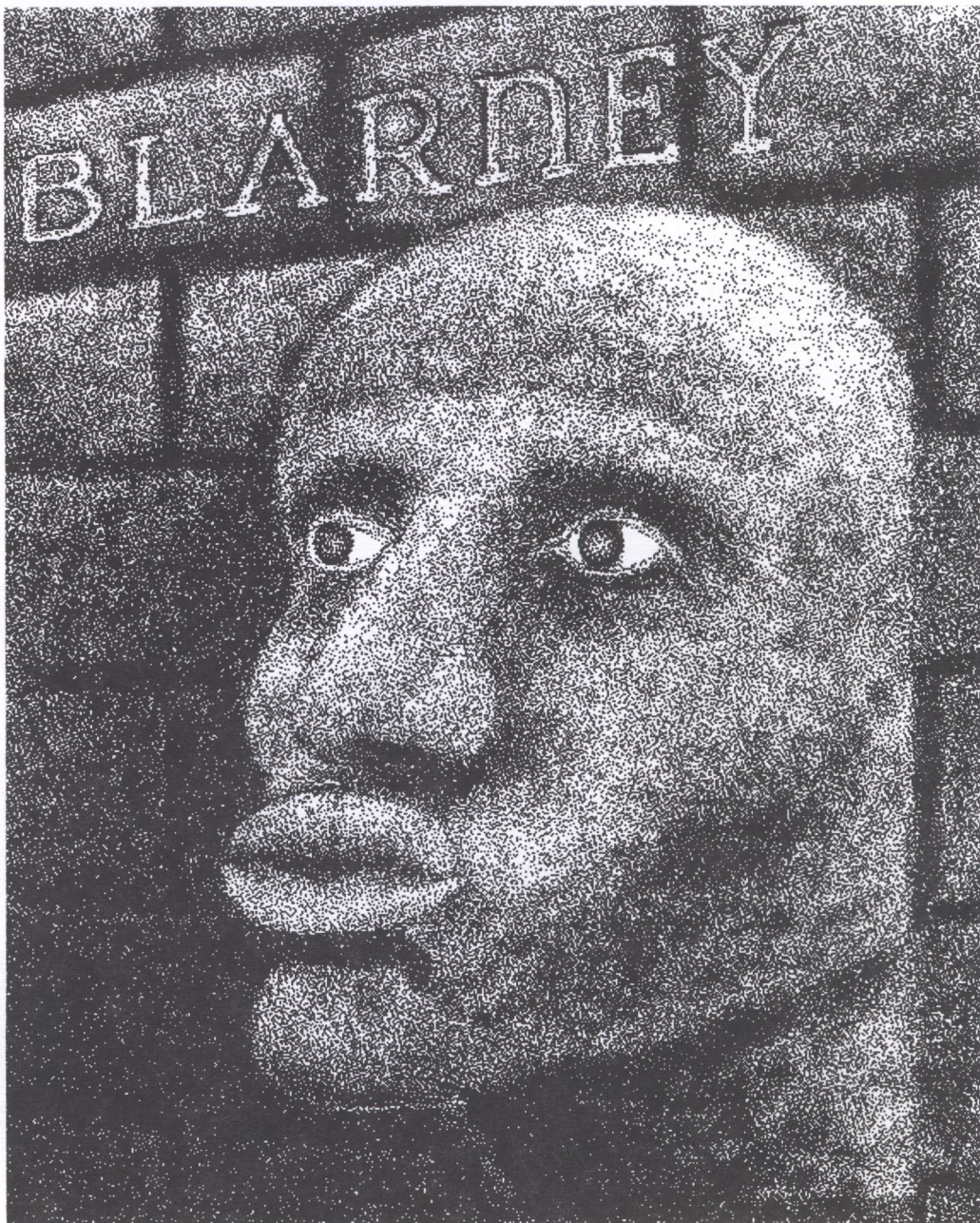
Marie Watt



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**J E F F  
M A G I L L**

*"I've been playing  
with Superpaint  
on a MacPlus (Hi  
Tomoshi)."*



**Shape of a Kissing Stone #8, SuperPaint 2.0**

## Maintenance

Alarm rings, four-thirty in the morning. King throws a hand out in the darkness to kill it before it wakes Susan. It's off before the second beep and King smiles to himself, thinks : *I'm getting faster*. Usually takes two or three beeps before he wakes and by that time Susan's awake, too, and in one rat bastard of a mood. She is not a morning person.

Time to get up. He swings his legs off the bed, slides out almost without moving the sheets, thinks : *I should have been a fireman*. Susan turns in her sleep, grunts softly in that way that only women do. King watches her, adds : *or a gigolo*.

He chuckles, leans over, kisses her behind the ear, makes his way by touch out of the bedroom, closes the door : softly, softly. He's pleased with himself. He flips on the lights, squints his eyes shut and then opens them slowly. He walks into the kitchen.

Mr. Coffee's already up, and King grabs his *Fuck This Shit* mug from the sink, pours himself a cup of, fishes a cigarette out of the pack on the drainboard, fires up. The smoke burns going down, burns worse coming out his nose. *First cigarette of the day*, he thinks, *best cigarette of the day*. *Hurts*. *Go figure*.

He's still standing in front of the sink, looking out the little window at the swing set in his neighbor's backyard. He reaches over and turns off the kitchen lights, letting the early-morning murk spill back in through the window. There's fog outside, and he thinks : *This is not the morning*. *This is the middle of the night*. He shivers a little, takes a swig of coffee, a drag off the cigarette. He can feel both of them bite into the lining of his stomach a little. So there's breakfast.

He gets dressed, locks the front door behind him, and walks out onto the driveway. He sees Susan's little red Escort and thinks he might like to drive it to work today instead of his big blue pickup that pumps gasoline fumes into the cab when you turn on the heater. *It might be nice for a change*, he thinks, and then considers that it might also be a way for Susan to be good and pissed off when he gets home.

He climbs into the pickup, throws it into neutral, and coasts backward out the driveway and onto the street, only turning over the engine when he



**A D A M  
B R O N S O N  
M C I S A A C**

*"Here in the darkness, the best we can hope to do is build a window."*

is out of earshot of the house. Susan's a light sleeper.

Five o'clock. Time to go to work.

•••••

So he's mowing the lawn in front of this apartment building a couple of hours later, and he sees this man gesture to him from one of the ground floor apartments. He knows what's coming, but he waves absently, leans over the handlebars of the mower, steers it away from the building.

A minute or so later, he feels the hand on his shoulder, and he jumps a little for dramatic effect, turns around, sees the man standing there in a crisp glen-plaid suit and a deep tan, smiling.

King takes his time shutting down the mower. He slides his white plastic earmuffs down so they hook around his neck.

"I didn't mean to startle you," the man says, shifting his briefcase from his right hand to his left.

"I didn't mean to be startled," King says. "What can I do for you?"

"Well," the man says, squinting at the red and white nametag on the left breast of King's coveralls, "You know, King, Wendy and I would really appreciate it if you would take a little better care when you're edging near the creek. Look at this over here —" he takes King by the shoulder and steers him toward the bank, stabbing his finger at a patch of longer grass near the water's edge. "Wendy always says it looks so nice when you trim it the way that you sometimes do."

King nods. "Yes, sir," he says. "I was planning on it. Just wanted to get the bulk of it done early so I can spend the afternoon on the tight stuff."

The man claps King on the back. "Good man," he says. "Well, I've got to get to work."

"Yes, sir," King says. "Have a good day."

"I will, as long as that's done by the time I get home."

"Consider it done."

"All right, King," the man says, and winks.

•••••

Four o'clock in the afternoon. Quitting time. Susan doesn't get home until about five-thirty, so King pulls by Florian's for a quick drink. It's happy hour. He gets a double bourbon at the bar, parks himself in the corner table near the window. He's alone, except for Leslie, the bartender, and a cocktail waitress whom King calls The Blonde. He kills fifteen minutes nursing the bourbon and watching the traffic on Montgomery Street outside. A shiny red pickup with black-tinted windows pulls up to the curb, stops. Flowing script on the passenger's door reads : *Virgil's Pest Control*. The driver's door opens, and the bearded face of his brother-in-law pops out, grinning. King raises his drink in salute. Here's Virgil.

•••••

"So, how'd the day go?" Virgil asks.

"Started out fine," King says. "Say, you got a smoke?"

Virgil nods, tosses a pack of Pall Malls on the table. "So you say it started out fine?" he says.

"Yeah."

"Where'd you work?"

"The Barbie Building." King calls the apartments by the stream the Barbie Building, because it's painted in what he considers to be a Barbie flesh color, and because he considers those who live in it to be "Anal-retentive Ken-

## THE JASON

and-Barbie types.”

“No shit?” Virgil says. “I’m taking care of some ants over there later this week.”

“Yeah, well, see if you can pump a little gas into one of the ground-floor apartments. Every week, this guy comes out tells me how much grass he wants taken off, like he’s getting a haircut or something. Tan guy. Wife name of Wendy, I guess.”

“That could be the one,” Virgil says. “It’s ground floor is all I can remember. I’ll put in a good word. Wife stay home during the day?”

“I don’t know. I’ve never seen her.”

“Hope she does. Love bored housewives,” Virgil says, wheezes out a laugh.

Virgil is a fat man, fat enough to make a lot of noise breathing.

King gives Virgil a courtesy smile. He doesn’t say anything, gestures to The Blonde to bring him another bourbon.

Virgil grabs a Pall Mall, loses most of the business end in his beard, lights up, blows a column of smoke over King’s head, sighs. “Tell you what, boy,” he says, combing back his hair through stubby fingers, “You should of stayed in pest control. Oh, here’s Bob. Hiya, Bob. How the hell are you?”

•••••

Five o’clock. Home again, home again. King takes a long, hot shower. He wraps a towel around his waist, pads into the kitchen, takes a bottle of Jim Beam from a cupboard, pours

himself a stiff one, drinks it, pours himself another, adds ice. The neighbors’ kids play on their swing set. King can hear one of them singing nonsense words to the tune of *When Johnny Comes Marching Home*. Their father walks out on the back porch. “Shut up! You kids shut up!” he yells. King frowns.

He doesn’t know his neighbors. The father doesn’t seem to be working, or he works strange hours. King only sees him occasionally, standing in the front yard, hosing down the grass, or else pitching horseshoes by himself.

King remembers a dog. The dog used to bark late into the night, and the neighbor would

come out and say “Shut up! Just shut the fuck up!” and then the front door would slam and the dog would bark some more until the neighbor came out again and this time the dog would yelp once and then there was quiet. Sometimes, the dog would come over to King and Susan’s and King remembers it as a nice dog. Only once they went to Susan’s mother’s for the weekend and when they came back there wasn’t any more dog.

*Next time we go away, King thinks, when we come back there might not be any more kids.* He frowns some more. The kitchen is cold, and he can feel the bourbon sinking into his brain.

•••••

Five-thirty. Susan’s home. King’s still standing in the kitchen in his towel. Susan says : “What, you

**King calls the apartments by the stream the Barbie Building, because it’s painted in what he considers to be a Barbie flesh color, and because he considers those who live in it to be “Anal-retentive Ken-and-Barbie types.”**

## SPRING 1990

haven't gotten dressed yet? Or is this something new?"

"No, I just got out of the shower. I was watching that bastard yelling at his kids."

Susan kisses him on the shoulder. She rests her chin where she just kissed so that their heads are side by side, looking out the window. "Some people just shouldn't have children," she says.

"Yep," King says.

"That doesn't necessarily mean us."

"Yes, it does."

"Let's not get started here. How was work?"

"Same. You?"

"Deposition in the morning, turned out it lasted most of the afternoon as well."

"Yeah? What for?"

"Wife-beating."

"Oh. What do you want for dinner?"

"Something light. I had a late lunch. Oh, and make enough for three. Margot's coming over."

"Why?"

"She left Ted. Or Ted left her. It depends on who you talk to."

"How's she taking it?"

"She's taking it like Margot takes everything."

"Neat. So you want to eat out?"

.....

"Hiya, Kingsley," Margot says, slapping him on the ass. He's dressed now, but still in the kitchen, sautéing chicken. Susan wants chicken. Fine.

"Hiya, Margot," King says, pronouncing the T. "What's shakin'?"

"Oh, nothing. I left Ted."

"That's too bad," King says.

"You want a drink?"

"Sure."

"You can have anything you want, so long as you want bourbon."

"No," Susan calls from the bedroom, "I bought some gin. Look near my purse."

King finds the gin, says: "So, what do you want? Susan? You want a drink?"

"Do we have any tonic?" Susan says, walking into the kitchen. She removes an earring, sets it on the counter.

"I think so. Somewhere."

"That'll be fine for me, too," Margot says.

"Gin and tonics all around, then," King says. He mixes them strong.

.....

Dinner. Margot reels off a list of everything she can do now that she's single again. King notices Susan has that cloudy look in her eyes she always gets when she's trying like hell to pay attention. He chews his chicken carefully. *It's not bad*, he thinks. He says: "Please pass the salt."

.....

Afterwards, King washes the dishes, like always. They don't have a dishwasher. He does them by hand. He sings to himself while he works. Nonsense words to the tune of *When Johnny Comes Marching Home*. He giggles. He is a little drunk.

Margot comes into the kitchen, watches him work. Her eyes are a little glassy.

"Where's Susan?" he asks.

"Bathroom. You're washing dishes. I think that's neat. Ted never washed dishes."

King shrugs, grabs a towel, starts drying.

"Ted never cooked, either. And he never washed dishes. I think that was something missing from our relationship."

## THE JASON

King doesn't have anything to say to that, so he says nothing.

The toilet flushes. Susan calls from the living room: "King? Did you take out the garbage?"

"Yeah."

Margot: "I think that's neat. Ted —"

"Listen, Margot," King says, "It's just a bunch of shitty dishes. They needed to be done, so I'm doing them. Okay?"

"—would never lift a finger around the apartment unless I told him to. I think that was something missing from our relationship."

King puts the dry dishes back in the cupboard, notices the plates already there are stacked in no particular order. Susan must have done the dishes last. He takes all of the plates out and begins stacking them in ascending order: dinner plates on the bottom, then salad plates, then dessert plates, then saucers. He likes it that way.

"I think I need a nice man," Margot says.

King says nothing. Margot hooks her arm around his waist, her hand a little too close to his ass for his taste.

"I should have stayed with you, King," Margot says.

He grunts, starts putting glasses away, again in ascending order, back to front. "Yeah, well, you didn't."

•••••

He had met Susan while he was dating Margot, and after Margot had lost interest, he had started dating Susan. He didn't try to think too much about it, and Susan and Margot never brought it up. He thought it was weird to have slept with two sisters and then married one of them. The first time with Susan, she had asked him who was better in bed, she or Margot. He didn't really know. Of course, he had said: "You are." What else do you say?

•••••

Margot has gone home. King watches the sweat dry on Susan's stomach by window light, and he forgets for a minute how it got there. It is late. Susan purrs a little bit and nuzzles her head between his shoulder and neck. King says: "I think I'm going to get up for a while."

"Why?"

"Restless. I'll be back in a while."

"Okay."

He gets out of bed, pulls on his trousers, goes downstairs. He opens the front door and walks, shirtless, into the night. He stops in the middle of the street, straddling the yellow divider line between his bare feet. *I'm getting a little belly*, he thinks. *How about that*. He watches the street lights turn off and on. He looks at the neighbors' houses. It is long after midnight. There are no signs of life.

He walks back to his house, wheels the mower out of the garage. It starts on the first try. •



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	<i>But to Pigeon Hosting Poets, Zimmer</i>	40	Roland Flint
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	<i>Crush</i>	51-52	Kristin Becker
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**Additional artwork by**

Michael Ishii (p. 55)

Dawn Pattison (ppg. 13, 25, 49)

Shawn Rodgers (pg. 53)

Marie Watt (p. 63)

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