

Phantasmagoria



Fall 1999

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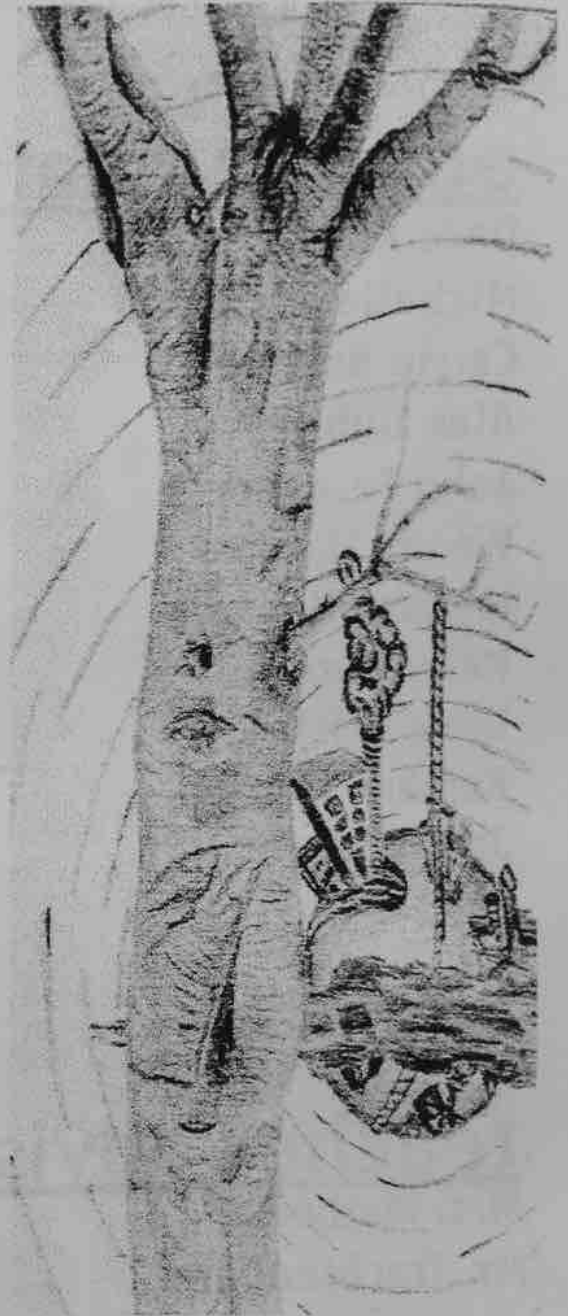
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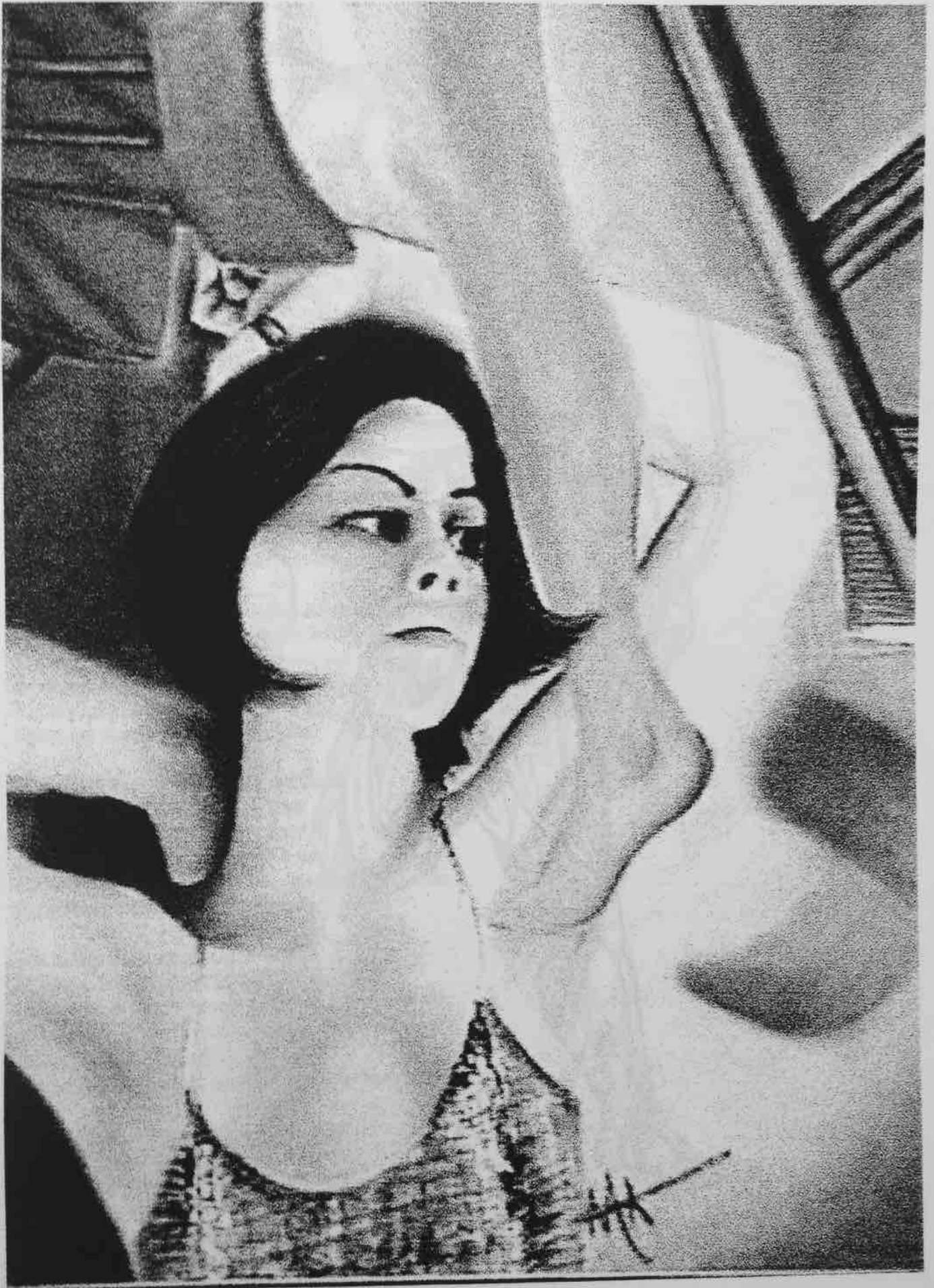
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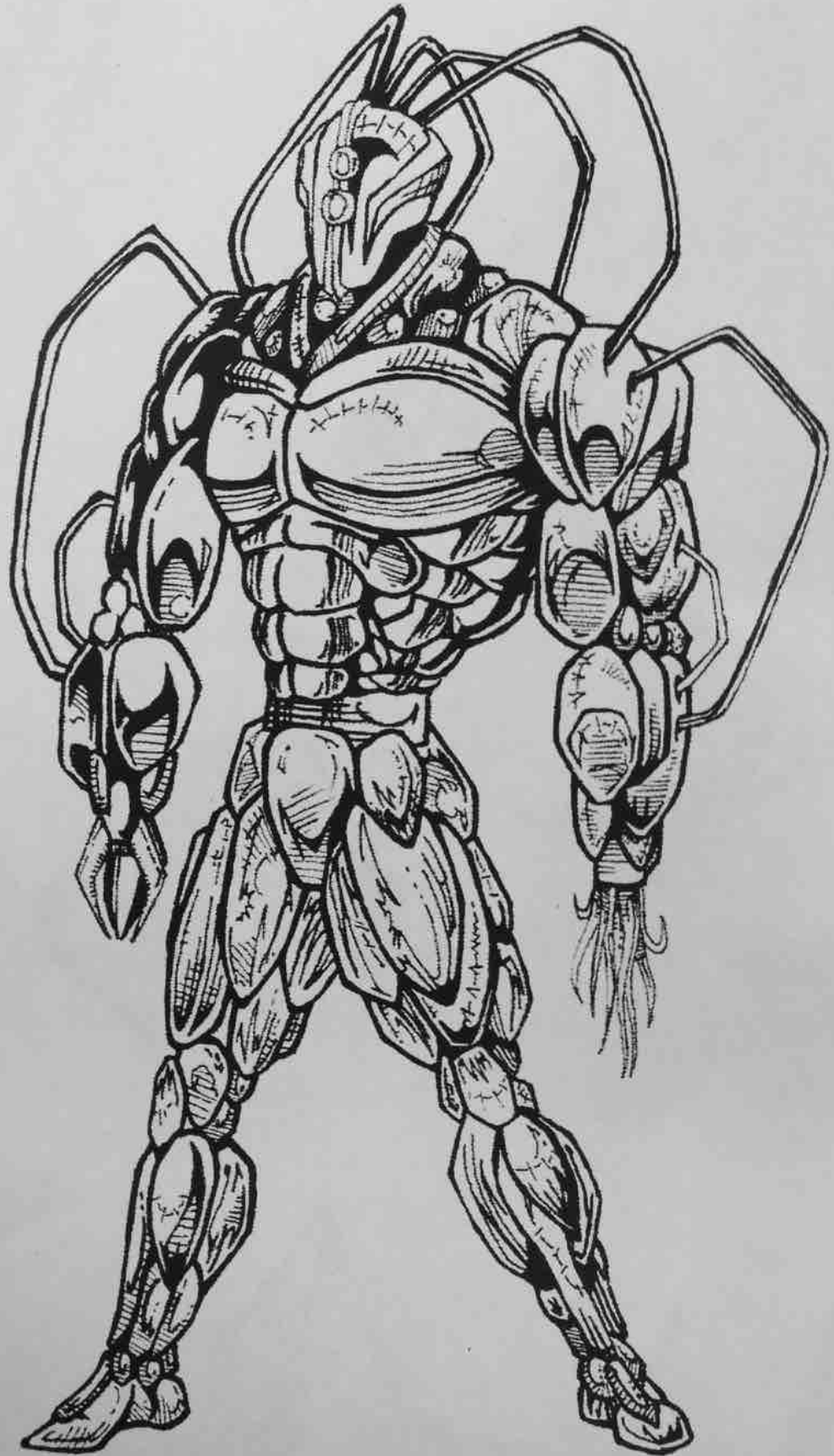
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Jessica Ewer



Michelle Arrowood



Jordan McBride

Spider Poem

With eyes closed I sense the sun has crept
Above. Not wishing to disturb
My last sleep before my trip home,
I roll off my tarp and let damp grass and warm sun soak me
From all sides. Such satisfying rest, even in my own
Bed, could not be found. The field with her

Owls, crickets, fire flies and beetles, her
Field mice, bats, and all the creatures who crept
Last night, sang to me like one of her own,
Lulling me into sleep impossible to disturb.
But now as I feel the weight of day upon me,
I accept this is not my place. I must, at noon, go home.

With thoughts of my home,
My mother, tending to her
Flower beds, anxiously waiting for me,
I open my eyes. For the night has long since crept
Away. Leaving the day to disturb
The pleasant lie that this field is my own.

Suddenly, I find I am not alone on my own
Pillow. The hostess of the grassy home
Where I lay, is so delicate, she could not disturb
Even the senses of my skin when her
Eight slender legs quietly crept
Upon my sleeping face to study me.

In my bed this scene would horrify me.
To find a hairy intruder in my own
Room, let alone a spider who crept
Across my cheek, would in my home
Make me feel unsafe and cause certain death for her,
Even though she had no intention to disturb.

But in this field, I am here to disturb.
The intruder who does not belong is me.
The spider is simply moving on her
Way, across a field which has always been her own
And I, am in the way of her home.
So with perserverance, over my head she has crept.

Not wishing to disturb what is not my own,
I gently lift her off me back to her home,
Realizing it is me, not her, who wrongly crept.

December Moon

Outside the tent,
wild dogs fight,
tearing apart morsels of food.
But from inside the tent,
the music flows.
It gives life to the dancing
girls, all clothed in red
robes of silk. The open roof
lets in the enticing
light of an April moon...
Happiness surrounds them:
so thick, almost tangible
so vibrant, so full of life
so empty of sorrow.

But the music must stop sometime.

The dancing has stopped,
the dust has settled,
the girls have fallen.
Their red robes are soiled.
And their wrinkled flesh hangs like saliva from a sleeping babe.

Clouds roll in like water
to hide the last light
of a dreary December moon.

A lone figure enters,
beckons the dancers.
They follow his guiding touch.
As he leads them away,
the fog hides their path...
while the death in the field
is swept away by the
brisk December winds.

Dan Connelly

To the Sea

To the sea, your boundless blue
embraces me like a son returning home.
I breathe in your mist and sit down
before you, watching, listening.
The screeching children chased by your waves
to safety in the warm tide pools.
The old fisherman who sails out far in his skiff
to be alone in your rocking arms again.
The screeching gulls that dive from the high noon sun
to pluck a meal from your bountiful basket.
Your tide, foaming champagne on the feet
of young barefoot lovers, whose eyes open in wonder at
your friend the Moon,
lying on a night blanket,
his watchful eye guarding you in slumber,
shining his blue light upon
thousands of ripples on the bed of your wake.
All the while, your waves endlessly hitting the rocks
tumbling, crashing, beating
some timeless truth I have yet to understand.

Kyle Repka

Why do lost loves linger, ever long,
Like the scent of marigolds on a moist day?
After hearts uprooted realize they have been wronged
The first instinct is simply to turn away.
With nostrils closed, one turns from orange and gold,
And bravely, chin high, traipses to the next field,
With held breath moves farther to behold
The lilacs, lilies, snapdragons, newly revealed.
The fresh awareness of petals dabbed with dew,
Of newly cut blades of grass recently sprung,
An intensified understanding of light and hue
Leads one to forget the pain and fill the lungs.
The body swarms with greetings of new scents, bold,
But not without the remnants of marigold.

Carolyn Beans

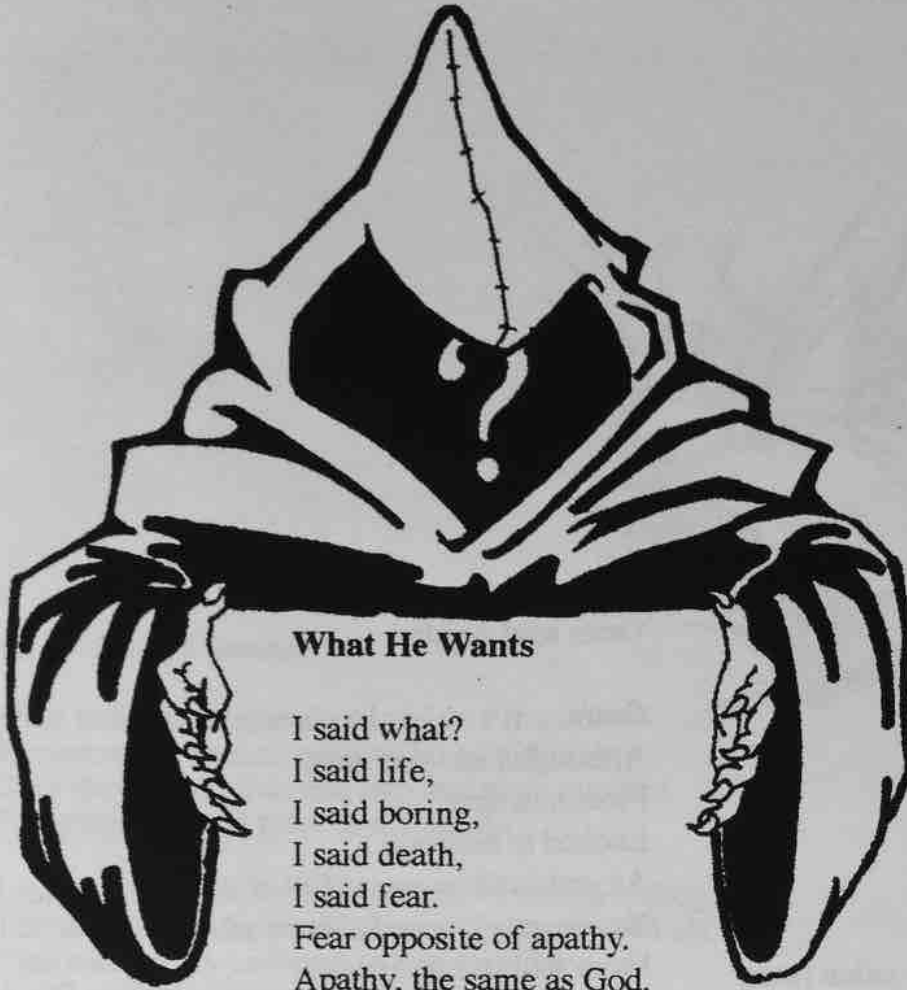
Couch Sitter

Locked behind doors, sitting on a couch in a blue ensemble
basking in the smell that one's body creates after not washing for two weeks
Sit, stare, biting fingernails down past the whites, waiting for the women in white to
deliver the pills.
Now, sit some more and watch the clock tick until the second hand starts to beat in sync
with your heartbeat.
Not strong enough to stand, not weak enough to sleep.
One of the doors opens, but the man entering locks it behind him. --
Butterflies fluttering their wings on the lining of your stomach, making it impossible to
sit still.
Instant scrambled eggs on the menu tonight, probably leftovers from yesterday.
Gotta get to the outside, gotta get off this couch
Just need some fresh air,
clean, fresh air running through your lungs, and you're set.

Kelly Kozma



Ryan Montella



What He Wants

I said what?
I said life,
I said boring,
I said death,
I said fear.
Fear opposite of apathy.
Apathy, the same as God.
God loves,
and gets what he wants.

I said care
I said try
I said fallacy
I said logic
I said faith.
Faith, the opposite of doubt.
Doubt, the same as science.
Science destroys,
and gets what he wants.

I said me,
I said you,
I said learn,
I said easy,
I said read.
Read, the opposite of spectator.
Spectator, the same as TV.
TV brainwashes,
and gets what he wants.

Drew Kristel

Rainbow clown
Blue balloons
Laughing smiles
Angry bombs
Wasteful hate
Endless war
Death and fate.
Precious girl
Porcelain comb
Pink makeup
Then she's grown.
Shiny car
Red traffic light
Naïve boy
Meets death tonight.
Dunes of sand
Boardwalk shops
Cotton-candy
Old flip-flops.
Twisted man
Loaded gun
Senseless shot
What's he won?
Childhood dreams
Corrupted world
Shattered lives
Now unfurled.

Wendy Hawkes

The First Time I Saw Death

The first time I saw death
she was grey tired
and lying on her side.

I was led down the hall,
my tiny shoes stepping slowly
beside my older brother.

The door half closed,
creaked open louder
than my drumming heart.

An adult left my brother and I
alone
in the stale must and still dust.

The curtains glowed
with outside sun
and paths of light shot to the wooden floor.

Her bed, veiled by darkness
beyond the window,
rested still in shadows.

Her distant voice greeted us,
pulling us closer to those ominous shadows
and clamping my throat shut.

And I stood frozen beside my big brother,
who did not know what to say,
before an aunt we had never known.

Kyle Repka

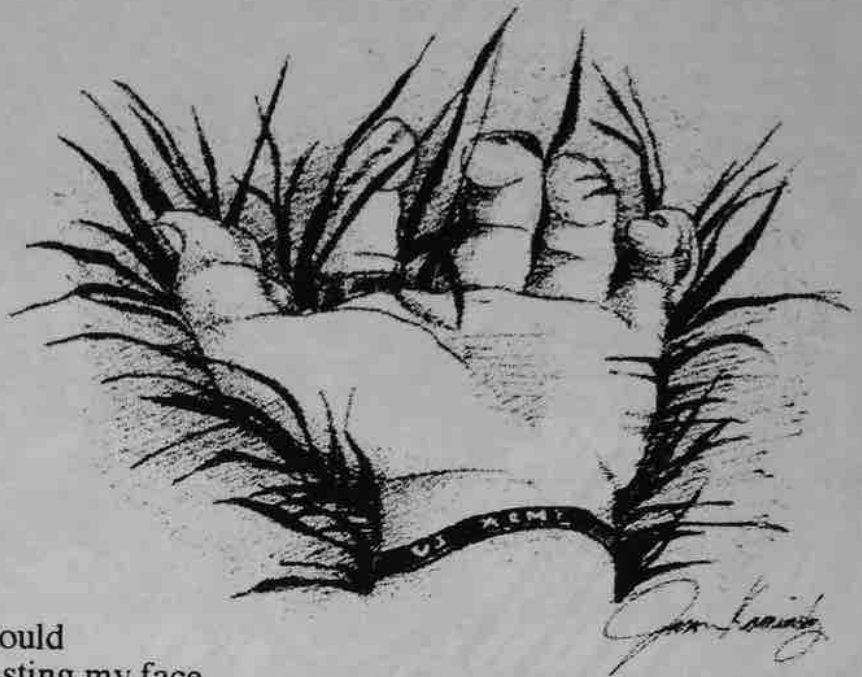
Once and Again

Gram. . .it's so hard to remember you
Although I see you here,
Frozen in time
Locked in embrace
As you smile at me so full of life
Your eyes glow and capture mine.
From within emotions stir
beckon me to sit once more
With you,
Upon a tattered green sofa
Cast in dim yellow light,
And remember. . .

So young then, just 4 years old
You fed me Stelladoro's.
I hated them
You never knew
I didn't get to tell you.

Gram, it's painful to see your face
Wanting to recall your touch.
I long to see you clearly now
Through voids of gray, a distant face
This clarity I need to know
To feel your soul
inside of me.

Jason Kaminsky



An Undying Presence

Wind and rain surround me
Wrapping me in their arms as he would
Only they aim to hurt and slap and sting my face
Bringing out a red glow in my cheeks

I stand, staring at the casket, made of a deep mahogany
The same wood he would use in carving the bed set
That rests in my bedroom to this very day
A gift with love for my tenth birthday

I watch the emotion rise around us and form clouds
Little puffs hang around like the heavy cigar smoke
From the bars he loved in his youth
We breathe it all in

Uniformed men salute him with
Hands held high and the sound of a
Sobbing trumpet
Playing "Taps"

Guns are aimed high and fired
And across our bodies a tremor
Ripples as if that shot
Was the shot that ended him

I remember the tear that welled in his eye
When he talked of the war
Somehow it has found its way into
My eye at this moment

Though we all stand, waiting
For him to be laid to rest,
Seemingly mourning his loss,
There are some parts of him that live on and never die.

Justin Freese



Kate Haas

Jimmy Baby

I could tell the minute I got in the door and dropped my bag I wasn't staying. The towering foyer, floors a polished mahogany, was draped in black crepe streamers. They flickered in the abundant candlelight, which was unnecessary for the setting sun filled the house with a soft pumpkin orange glow. I softly groaned as my mother swept into the hall, arms outstretched.

"Jimmy, baby," she cooed. "How were your exams?" Her frizzy auburn hair flowed down to her waist as she gave me an easy embrace. "I've missed you so much."

She was arrayed in a long, ebony silk dress, its bodice tight and skirt full. Giving her a peck on the cheek, I knew this could only mean one thing.

"Mom," I began as she fluttered into the sunken living room, "you're not having one of your get-togethers tonight, are you?"

"Of course, dear, what does it look like I'm doing?" She looked at me as if my year in college had transformed my brain into nothing but a catalog of facts that now overlooked the obvious.

I slouched down onto the ivory damask sofa, messaging my suddenly throbbing temples. "Does Dad know about this?"

"Why would he?" she asked, eyes glassy. "He's in Reno for the week and should be home tomorrow morning." She suddenly broke out in spastic laughter. "How do you think we're living in a swanky place like this?"

Ignoring this final comment, I said in a collected voice, "Mom, you're a college educated, affluent woman. Why do you insist on indulging yourself in these fleeting whimsies?" My voice began to rise. "At Christmas it was Buddhism, then at Easter it was this witch business!" She was staring at me, her marbled gray-green eyes wide. My tone softened. "I . . . I just don't get it, Mom."

The coffee table was set with navy cut-glass goblets and dark stoneware bowls filled with unidentifiable treats. Sliding next to me on the couch, she offered me a sample. I readily declined. "You don't have to understand it, Jim, you just have to accept it." I shook my head. "Witches nowadays believe in using magic for positive purposes," she started explaining, as if I was five years old all over again. Frustrated, I threw up my hands and stood up. I was tired of returning home, not knowing what would greet me on the other side of the door. If Dad was there, then everything would be normal, the comforting image of home that I carried to Cambridge with me and that we portrayed to our elite suburban community. But if he was away on business, as was often the case, I could only guess what new passion Mom was pouring her energy into.

Before I left last autumn, I do not recall her being this drastic. Sure, she had her painting and harp along with the occasional yoga phase, but nothing like the untraditional religions and superstitions that now sparked her interest. It was unsettling, and I wanted to go up to the ancient grandfather clock in Dad's office and turn back its intricate hands to a time where routine reigned.

Mom eyed my bags, sprawled across the foyer floor. "Jimmy, would you mind taking your things up to your room? My guests will be here in an hour, and I don't want them tripping over your stuff."

Gathering my belongings, I headed up the wide staircase. "I'm going to spend the night at John's," I called down. John was a college buddy of mine who had a small apartment his parents bought him nearby. There was no way I could stay for her crazy rituals; it would drive me insane by the end of the evening.

When I came back down, Mom was frantically tearing through the closet. "Have you seen my cape, dear?" she asked, voice muffled.

Shifting my backpack, I muttered, "Probably with your broomstick," unable to stop the sarcastic comment from escaping my lips. There was no response. Shrugging, I slipped out the carved oaken front door. Before I reached my car, a glossy Lexus pulled up the curved drive and parked behind it.

Silently cursing, I put on a smile and went to welcome my father, stiff in his conservative pin-striped suit. "James," he said, sticking out a strong hand. "I didn't realize the semester was over so soon."

I popped open the trunk to help him with his luggage. "Yep. Time just flies, doesn't it?" I sounded like a blubbing fool.

He gravely nodded. "Have you already seen your mother?"

Avoiding eye contact, I responded, "Yeah. She made it sound as if you wouldn't be home tonight, that you were in Reno."

Handing me his black leather briefcase, soft from immaculate care, he explained, "I was, but the deal went through easier than expected. We held back so long that they were desperate." He started up the landscaped walkway, baggage in tow. "Are you coming, James?"

Bracing myself, I followed him to the front porch, its white gingerbread trim rosy in the smoldering sunset. He opened the front door, the narrow cut glass panel reflecting distorted images of his head and evergreen tie, and stepped inside. The streamers hung down, openly confronting my unsuspecting father. Glancing at him, I saw he was clearly perplexed. His high brow was deeply rippled, his mouth slightly down-turned. Voice steady, he called out, "Carol!"

There was a click of the phone and the rustle of her skirt. She swept into the foyer, thin eyebrows arched. "You're home early, Matt."

"I know," he replied. Gesturing to the streamers and candles, he questioned, "What is all this about, Carol? Am I missing something?"

"No, no," she reassured him, smoothing the lapel of his suit. "I just was welcoming Jimmy home for the summer. He had a great freshman year, you know." Her eyes met mine, beckoning me to keep my silence. "I thought I'd surprise him with some nice decorations, but all I could find are these old streamers from last Halloween. He got the idea, though." She saw him eyeing her dress. "I was going to play the harp, too, to practice for my solo at the music festival next month. My outfit for that is similar to this, but I don't have it yet. They say it's always best to practice under performance situations."

Not totally satisfied, my father nodded and kissed her pale cheek. "Well, I suppose I'm in now on the celebration."

A smile lit up her face. "Yes, you are. I've whipped up some new recipes from a show I saw on TV." She turned to me. "Jimmy, you help your father unpack while I finish getting everything ready. It'll take me a little while." She headed back into the kitchen.

Shaking his head, my father became aware for the first time of the backpack slung over one

of my shoulders. "Were you going somewhere, James?"
I shook my head. "Not anymore."

Long after midnight, I was shaken from my fitful slumber by a low whistle from below. I stumbled down the stairway, clutching the satin banister, towards the faint fluorescent light radiating from the kitchen. It was a cook's dream, with a stainless steel refrigerator, six burner flat top stove, marble island with sink, two ovens, and ample counter space. Mom sat at the pedestal table, a porcelain mug of steaming green tea in front of her. Her hair was piled high upon her head, her stare vacant. A gauzy cornflower blue robe was wrapped around her angular frame.

I cleared my throat, and she looked up, a faint twinkle leaping into her eyes. "Hey, Jim, pour yourself some tea."

I went over to the nearby cabinet, its panes etched with wildflowers. "No thanks," I said, taking a cobalt glass. I filled it with orange juice, nice and pulpy, the way I like it.

As I sat down next to her, she began, "Jim, I'm sorry about tonight . . ."

Shaking my head, I replied, "Forget it, Mom."

"No, Jimmy, I know it was awkward. I know you wanted to leave it all behind." She covered my hand with hers. "Thanks for staying quiet, even though you didn't like what I was planning on doing."

I sipped my juice. "What ever happened with your guests?" I asked, voice low. "I was waiting for them to show up, but they never did."

"I was going to come out and talk to you before you left, but I saw your father pull up. I then called Amanda, the group leader, and told her I couldn't have the meeting tonight. She called everyone to cancel." She began to softly moan. "They're getting so frustrated with me. I rarely can go to meetings when your father's home, and I've had only two here." Wistfully, she whispered, "I hope they don't decide to remove me from the group."

"Well, you could tell Dad about the group," I suggested, already knowing that wasn't a feasible option.

Her chiming laugh echoed throughout the room. "Consider my removal definite if I did that. You know how your father is. It's hard enough for him to turn a blind eye to my painting and support me with the harp. He's just not into anything that could be viewed as odd by this community."

"That's because if anyone finds out, his reputation will be tarnished. He worked so hard to make it here; he just wants to fit in."

"What he doesn't know can't hurt him. They say that ignorance is bliss." She chuckled. "Besides, the group is not exactly local. No one will find out."

"Mom, you can't assume that," I insisted. Part of me wanted to tear upstairs, fling open the master bedroom door, and expose to my groggy father the truths he was oblivious to. The other half was drawn to my mother, who just wanted to follow her own roaming spirit. She never was quite comfortable with the ritzy life, full of parties straight from 'Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous' that were filled with polite how-do-you-do's and feigned interest in the hostess' problems with her reservations in Paris. I have never seen a more contented person than Mom in her frayed jeans, reminiscent of the sixties and streaked in acrylic purple paint, adding the finishing touches to a landscape. Except maybe my father when he stood tall at those extravagant affairs, laughing just long enough at just the right volume, crystal champagne glass resting comfortably in his hand. He had those parties down to a science now.

Mom stirred some more lemon into her tea. "Listen, Jimmy, let's make a deal. I will be more careful about what I do if you will just stay silent about this a little longer so I can fix things up with the group. I think we could make an arrangement where I could pursue my belief on a more individual basis but still have contact with the group. That way they won't get mad at me for all the meetings I end up missing, but I can still stay in touch with them."

I knew this was still a sacrifice for her, but it had to be done for Dad's sake. It seemed as if he already had some suspicions that something was amiss. "Okay," I agreed. "Just don't take long. I won't volunteer info, but I can't lie to him forever. He's always seen right through me."

She nodded, understanding. "Thanks, Jim."

I had planned this summer as a time to get to know my father better, to really start bonding with him as equals. Now I crossed my fingers, hoping those business trips would consume the majority of his time. Secrets are safe in my silence. When I start talking, though, they only remain hidden up to a certain point.

Lady Summer soon put on all her charms, seducing with warm, airy days and clear, sparkling

nights, teasing with gentle cool breezes that ruffled the waxy green leaves which served as a canopy above our rope hammock. They felt delicious against my golden-brown skin. I was tanning quite nicely, rather like a turkey at Thanksgiving. You'd have thought I'd been basted in clarified butter. Though it was my vacation, it was not all play. Fortunately, my job, acquired with a little help from Dad, was neither strenuous nor tedious. It served as a nice escape from the house, where Mom indulged in whatever struck her fancy. One day I returned home to find several visitors clad in long black embroidered capes huddled around the kitchen table, my mother proudly sitting at the head. I questioned her progress on her side of the deal with a skeptical look, but she merely smiled in return. I then went up to Dad's office, sunk into a maroon leather padded chair, and stared at the grandfather clock as it irreverently ticked the moments away.

Every other week my father seemed to be away with work. However, he had a habit of returning slightly earlier than originally planned, intently glancing around the house when he arrived. I think ever since he discovered Mom in that bizarre raven dress he was uneasy about leaving her alone, unsure of her possible actions. Nonetheless, he said nothing, and on the surface our family life remained tranquil.

The Stardust Music Festival at the country club occurred in mid-July, Mom playing in a small ensemble that included several flutists, two violinists, and a pianist. All were members of the club. During their performance, Dad sat proudly in the floral-cushioned wicker chair, eyes gleaming with approval at the sound of the praising murmurs around us. That event stands out in my mind as the first and only time Dad was ever openly supportive of Mom's creative endeavors. I had hoped that would lead to a better understanding between them or at least to a respect of her interests. It could have, too, if it wasn't for the careless, snide comment of Mrs. Regina Aster, which my father overheard. I knew it was merely out of spite, for she had no musical talent whatsoever, and everyone was gushing over Mom's heartfelt performance. Ivory linen suit neatly pressed, teardrop diamond earrings glittering, she said to her two companions, "What is Carol supposed to be today? An angel?" She smirked. "Well, she certainly has a long way to go."

After that, his support was shaken. He congratulated her heartily and kissed her warmly when the selection was completed, amidst genuine compliments and a standing ovation. Dad really seemed proud of her. The comment stuck with him, though, despite the fact it was petty and meaningless. After the festival, while we waited for her in the car, he sat deep in thought, mindlessly fiddling with his opal cufflinks. Mom slid into the car, absolutely glowing. Her cheeks were flushed to a rose-petal pink as she asked me, "So, Jimmy baby, was I as good as you thought I would be?"

I smiled broadly. "I've never seen a better harp player in my life."

Dad nodded. "Almost everyone loved it, Carol. You were the star of the show."

She playfully squeezed his arm. "Did you really like it, Matt?"

"Of course I did."

That satisfied her, and she sank back into the taupe leather upholstery, happily staring out at the sprawling houses that passed before us. Perhaps she imagined that life was like this always, with him supporting all her passions, however fleeting they may be. Perhaps she dreamed he would come home in the middle of one of her meetings and say nothing but, "Sorry to bother you. I'll catch you later."

Whatever her fantasy, that was all it was. I personally wished he would straighten her out, get her to forget about this supernatural belief. She was taking a terribly long time to settle things with her group, and I was starting to wonder if she was making any effort at all. I had kept my side of the bargain, but I was tired of watching what I said, being the apprehensive one while she held her meetings. She didn't seem worried that Dad would pop home at any moment. I resolved to bring it up with her as soon as possible.

I didn't get around to asking her until a few days later. Dad was at work, so I brought up the topic as we lounged around on the pool deck. The sun was blinding as I reclined on the turquoise padded chaise. Adjusting my sunglasses, I asked, "So, Mom, making much progress settling matters with your group?"

She shifted in her seat. "Not really, hon. They're so accepting now that I can't bear to break away. Besides, everything's working out fine. Your father has no idea."

Vigorously shaking my head, I said, "Mom, I can't keep up this charade. Dad's not blind. You're starting to get too bold, Mom. You've had three meetings in the last four weeks."

"I know, I know. But Jimmy . . ."

"Mom, no. I can't keep doing this. You're not keeping your side of our deal. You're the one who came up with it in the first place!"

Taking a long sip of her icy pink lemonade, she responded, "Jimmy, I'll get around to it. I just need to ease into it. You don't want to get on the bad side of a witch." She chuckled at her own joke, pathetic as it was.

I turned to her and spoke with exaggerated slowness, "There are no such things as witches. Let's be reasonable here." She gave me an evil look. "If Dad asks me about what's going on, I'm not going to lie to him. You've had plenty of time."

Placing my shades on one of the tables, I walked over to the diving board, bounced a few times, and made a clean dive. When I resurfaced, my mother was facing the back door, which my father soon came through. In his hands was a thick book, covered in ebony vinyl. "Who's is this?" he asked, his face set in stone.

Wiping my eyes, I saw the cover read, "The Truths of Witches." Here comes the storm, I thought.

Mom sat up rigid. "Why, Matt, that's mine."

"I'd like to know why it is in my house. Are you up to something, Carol, that I should know about?"

"No, Matt. I just borrowed it from someone down at the art shop. It has some wonderful illustrations I was planning on experimenting with on my own." She didn't bat an eye as she blatantly lied. Maybe because she was all too used to it.

His midnight blue eyes turned to me, bobbing in the deep water. "James, have you ever seen this book?"

"No, never, Dad," I said, relieved that I could give a straight, honest response. "Where did you find it?"

"In the corner living room table, where my old yearbooks usually are. I found them in the hall closet." He looked back to my mother, who was reapplying her bug repellent. "Carol, let's keep this superstition stuff out of the house. I don't like it, and I don't want people getting the wrong impression. You're an affluent woman in this community, and . . ."

She broke him off. "Of course dear. I guess I could use the computer to look up artwork like that in the future." He seemed pleased with that suggestion. "How about you get changed and come down for a nice swim? You've been working so hard and deserve to relax a little."

"Maybe later," he replied. "I've got to finish a few things first." He went back inside.

Mom looked back down at me, sighing. Floating on my back, I said, "I told you I'm not going to lie to him."

I don't know if Mom had her witch group over much after that, for I tried to stay away from home as much as possible unless Dad was there. I wanted to separate myself from a situation I was already deeply entangled in. My job took up a nice chunk of my time, and I caught up with some former high school classmates I hadn't seen all year.

One Monday in early August I went with Dad to his office for the day, and he introduced me to some friends of his in the finance department, hinting at a possible internship for me later on in college. I hadn't been there for years, since I was twelve. I remember spinning myself dizzy in his swivel leather chair, the paisley-papered wall whizzing past me. Now I viewed everything with a discerning eye, a bit ashamed that I couldn't hop into the chair and give myself a whirl. I would have, too, but if I was going to ever work here I had to portray a responsible, mature image.

The ride home was silent, save for the soundtrack of Dad's favorite musical, volume turned low. When we were half way there, Dad abruptly asked, "James, what do you think of your mother?"

Startled, I responded, "What do you mean?"

Scratching his neck, he said, "I mean, do you know anything, James, that I might be missing? I've felt she's been acting strangely for the longest time, especially when I come home to find her in long black dresses or with books about witches. Does this make any sense to you?"

I wrestled with what to say in reply. I knew he was asking what she had confided in me and what she was doing when he wasn't around. While I had promised to tell the truth, I wasn't in the mood to divulge all her secrets either. Finally, I came up with what I thought was the best response. "Maybe you should ask her."

He focused on the road ahead, now sure that something was going on behind his back. "I think I will."

The next day he left for a conference in San Diego, saying that he would be home Sunday evening. Mom went to a meeting on Wednesday afternoon, instructing me that if my father called to

tell him she was shopping. When the phone rang, I let the answering machine pick it up.

On Friday it was Mom's turn to have a meeting. The house looked much like it did that day I arrived home, gaudy streamers in the foyer, snacks on the glass-topped coffee table, stout candles burning brightly. This time, though, I left. I went to John's, where a bunch of our friends gathered for a casual get-together. It was after midnight when I headed back home, stars in the midnight velvet sky gleaming brightly. The lukewarm air was scented with honeysuckle as I pulled up the driveway. The front windows of the house were ablaze with light, throwing patches of buttery yellow onto the plush manicured lawn.

Frowning, I got out of my car. I then saw my father's Lexus around the bend of the drive. Cringing, I stood dead in my tracks. He caught her. He came home to find a baker's dozen of modern witches sprawled across his traditional living room, their handmade brooms stuck in the brass umbrella stand, my mother their gracious hostess. And odds are he didn't simply say, "Sorry to bother you. I'll catch you later."

I stood there for a minute, unsure of what to do. It would be easy to go back to John's and come home the next morning as if I knew nothing, hoping things would blow over by then. But I was too involved, and the future of our family life seemed to be at stake. Taking a deep breath, I went in the house.

The streamers were still in place, but the candles were snuffed out. The living room was deserted, and Dad's luggage sat at the foot of the steps. It was uncannily quiet. I had expected hollering or crying or shouting or something other than this heavy silence that filled the air. They must be upstairs, I figured.

When I reached the upstairs hallway, I saw sliver of light escaping from Dad's study. At the other end of the hall, the master bedroom door was wide open. Mom stood staring at the crisply made bed, hands on her hips. As I entered the room, I saw it was covered in neat piles of clothing. Alarmed, I asked, "Mom, what's going on?"

Her head jerked up. Sheepishly, she said, "Your father came home in the middle of my meeting."

"I figured that," I said.

"He just stood there, silent for a moment, letting it all sink in. Then, in the calmest, coldest voice, he told everyone to go home." I could see her replaying the scene in her mind. "They did, apologizing all the way out the door. That's what kind of nice people they are. It wasn't their fault he came home early." She shook her head. "Then we got into a fight about what I can and can't do. I told him I could do whatever tickled my fancy, especially since I make sure none of the neighbors know. But he didn't like that." She glanced down the hall, the light from under his door clearly visible. "He's been in his study ever since."

I pointed to all her clothes. "Well, then what is all this about?"

She methodically began placing the piles into an old, beaten wicker suitcase, the ID tag so out of date that it still had her maiden name written on it. "I just can't stay here any longer if I can't do what I want. A marriage is not a dictatorship, Jimmy."

Her calm voice irritated me. "Where on earth are you going to go? You have no money of your own."

"Your father will give me some, I know he will. I don't know if you remember my Buddhist friends, but they all moved down to a commune in West Virginia. They told me to join them any time I wanted. I'm taking them up on the offer."

My mother was moving to a commune. I could feel any trace of stability still left in my life slipping away. I half expected my father to prance into the room wearing a frilly lace tutu I was so shaken.

"Mom, it's not 1960 anymore, nor are you twenty-three years old."

She came over and kissed me on the cheek. "I'm going to miss you, Jimmy baby."

I was powerless. Disheartened, I headed down the hall to my father's office. After three sharp knocks, I heard him say, "Who is it?"

Pressing up against the door, I answered, "It's me, Dad, James."

There was a long pause. "Come in, son," he finally said.

I opened the door. He sat at his desk, tie loosened, hands behind his head. The room was dimly lit, throwing long shadows in the corners. Leaning across the desk, I asked, "Dad, do you know what Mom's doing right now?"

He shrugged. "Nothing I suppose I'd like, I'm sure."

I pulled up a clawed-foot chair next to him. "She's packing up so she can move to a commune."

His eyes narrowed. "A commune." He spat out the word. Contemplating this for several minutes, he at last said, slowly, "Maybe it's for the best."

I couldn't believe my ears. "Dad, you've always worried about what others would think. How are they going to react to this?"

"They don't have to know," he said. He cupped his hand around his ear. "What was that you said, son? She's going to a Mediterranean retreat?" He was going to cover this all up, as if it never happened, probably figuring at least there would be no more crazy visitors the neighbors might catch a look at.

I buried my head into my hands, suddenly wishing that summer were over. The idea of school never had seemed so appealing as it did then.

My father stood up, stretching. "I suppose I better discuss matters with her before she leaves." He started for the door. "Are you coming, James?"

"No." I couldn't watch them rationally discussing her leaving as if she was only going to New York for the week. It all seemed so unreal.

After he left, I reclined back in my chair, propping my feet up on the desk. The scent of pine furniture polish filled my nostrils as the grandfather clock ticked on, its rhythm uninterrupted by the chaos in my life. Mom's going to a commune, and Dad's okay with that just so he can keep his reputation. I groaned, wishing it would all go away. Maybe Mom was right, I thought. Maybe ignorance is bliss.

Melissa Hediger



Melissa Kapish

Her

Sometimes I wonder
What it's like to have a hug
Or maybe just a glance
To wear her clothes
And to pretend I'm her
I can't even know what it's like to be her
What did I do to upset her so
Was it me or my actions
I hope not
Maybe that's why she moved away
How could an eight-year old do so much harm
It doesn't matter
But why am I kidding myself
I will always love her
Because "her" is my mom

Sara Shevchik

The 5:10 at Market East

Balmy perspiration hangs in the air
Gaping windows cast clouded light onto
slabs of concrete below.
Vibrant mosaics of rainbow are illuminated.
Muffled announcement over the P. A., raises
a din a stir
Two ovals of white flash for a distance,
in the depths of the steel corridor.
Slight vibrations crescendo to a staccato roar.
A silver streak of grimme jets out into vacant space.
Meets the resistance of fume drenched air
and squeals to a halt.

Sweat stained suits merge all around,
towards orifices of this Metropolitan vessel.

The barking of a conductor
The sizzle of a pantograph tickling the
high tension wire.

Deftly the cars accelerate, and
slip once again into the tunnels.
The once prominent coaches, reduced
to only a pair of glowing red orbs

When at last, they too, are consumed.

Dave Alff

Familiar Sounds

A pleasant dream interrupted
by a stubborn alarm clock.
A loud reminder of a long day.

A drive to work becomes
a battle of car horns on the expressway.
Impatient drivers on a crowded street.

Crack! Lightning then thunder.
Mother nature drives me out of my brain.
I hide my head as an angry bolt reaches to the Earth.

Concentration toward homework withers,
as a sinister sibling blasts music.
Vibrations through the floor.
Impossible to think,
Train of thought lost.

Arms flail, feet kick.
A growl in a baby's tummy.
whines and Screams,
Louder as the hunger keeps growing.

Jet planes pierce the once tranquil sky.
Soaring through the clouds.
People frozen to look up at the cause of the menacing sound.
Heads up, ears covered.

Rare moments of silence.
Precious time to relax.
Sometimes the best sound to hear,
is a pin drop to the floor.

Michelle Donato

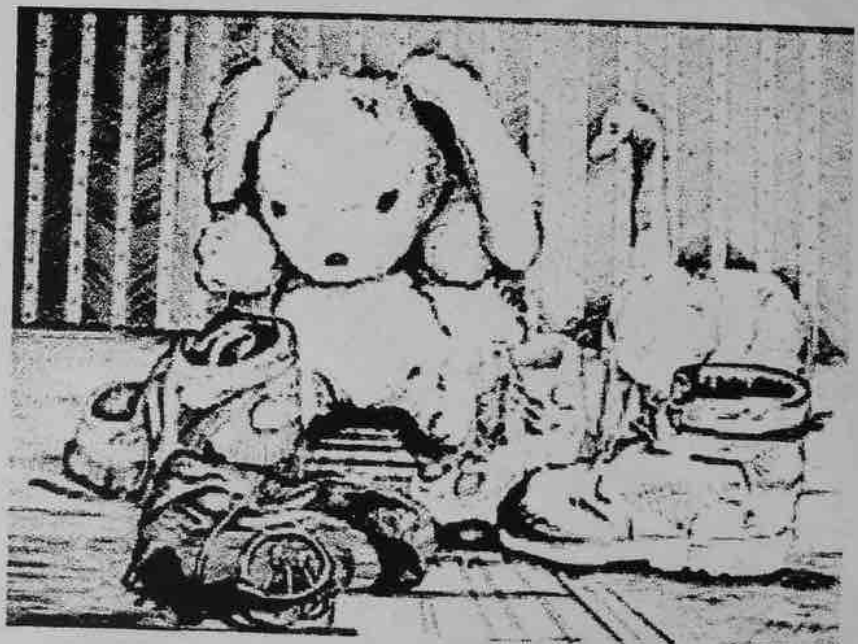


Jessica Ewer

Brother's Love

The sounds of roaring motors seem endless outside my bedroom window.
My cramped body rests innocently on my mattress,
my sheets
the only shelter I have from the outside world,
lightly lay on my frail body.
Hushed droplets of fear fall gently down my young, pale face.
I think "What if I were kidnapped?"
My body pulsates, heart beating hysterically, cowardly.
I removed my sheets,
my shelter.
Slowly I inch my way out of my bed,
my legs quiver like a crushed bug who's nerves have not yet died.
I tip-toe out of the darkness of my room, and
into the blinding light of the hall.
I'm frozen, my mutated toes digging deep into the stained carpet
waiting for my eyes to adjust to the new light, then
on my hands and knees, I crawl with the dust bunnies that line the corridor to my
brothers room.
I creep into his chamber.
Once again, I am in darkness.
All I make out, are the thin outlines of shut eyes,
comforting eyes resting above me.
I wander into another bed, but this time,
I don't need my sheets.
I am safe and protected,
my older brother serenely sleeping above me.

Anna Fuller



Untitled

The chair is cranked higher as my dripping head waits in anticipation for her next move. I am turned to face and image, at first familiar, but then as the minutes soak in, the image grows alien. The nose is there, the hazel eyes, the calm, folded hands. But what is that mole next to the left ear, I've never noticed that before, And since when has that zit sprung up, surely it wasn't there this morning. I had no idea the lips were so chapped and the skin so pale. I try to turn away, but am forced to hold my head just right. Freckles darken,
Teeth slide crooked,
Eyes aren't centered,
An eyebrow grows bushy,
Hands figit,
Neck pulses,
Eyes water,
Blemishes burgeon,
Moles abound,
Eyes slant,
Scissors subside.

"So what do you think? It's a new you, isn't it?"
"Yeah, thanks."

Carolyn Beans

I'm No Longer Here

Fall away into a world
Of sleep forever lonely,
Watching the stars melt away
Into the eyes of remorse
Drift past the crowd
On a bed cotton-snow white,
Holding the pearls in your hands
As still as the essence.
Drop them to the hearts
Of happy lovers so far
Dancing in the land
Of lilies below a sunny sky.
Did you know this place
Where love lives always?
Blown through by the fairies
Flitting through the soft light.
There he sits dreaming
Of what he longs to know
Tears falling, falling to the ground.
Wake up silently screaming
Come back to me...
I'm no longer here.

Wendy Hawkes



Michelle Arrowood

Life's music

Low hums,
Whining bows
Hitting and sliding across their idle strings
Rising with each stroke of guidance.
Till finally
Clear as each new beginning
The master's baton
Hits its start.

Echoes of sounds
Tug at the massive silence
Once hung about this place.
Instruments of low wood descent
Sweetly pump out a melodic coo
As brassy horns trumpet chords of beauty.
Blending with resonate hums
Building towards their climax.

Stunned I stare
Stumbling gracefully about.
Practiced notes of this great masterpiece
Falling into place.
With each slide of the trombone
I am led
Somewhere new with the roar of the tympani
Reverberating in my ear.

Thrashing in the mix of cries
His hand is slowly decrescendoing
Observing each nuance of the piece at hand.
Beads of sweat pour down his face
Baton piercing the thick air,
It is finished.

Thunderous applause drowns my very soul.
Taking my final bow
Gently stumbling from the light
Into the darkened hall.

Encore! Encore!
Sweet beckoning calls,
But I,
In all my glory
Have finally left the stage.

Lindsay Brown

King Maybe

Even when everything's right,
something's wrong.

Wheaties box nightmares
with fortunate Phil,
and Micheal Jordan.

Breakfast of Champions.....

So where's my bowl?

Still, I want that taste,
and the great way to start your day.

Slim who?

King Maybe!

Even when everything's wrong,
something's right.

Dean Koontz friends
with moe in the car,
and Vitamin A in their hearts.

Prolific writer of bubble gum.....

So where's my book?

Still, I think simple stole it,
and he's in pieces

Peace where?

King Maybe!

Even when there's celexa,
there's a seratonin shortage.

Penn state visits,
with Mr. Jeter,

and a bunch of cd's I already own.

Bryce Jordan Center.....

So who's this Miranda guy?

Still it was for the best,
and Fox and Scully could prove it.

Media what?

King Maybe!

Even when I'm blind,
I can see my reflection.

There's always Tom Eagleton
with ruined political aspirations,
and handy-dandy shock treatments.

I trust him.....

So where is he now?

Still a farmer,
and I am Tom Eagleton.

Judge who?

King Maybe!

Even when I'm right,
King Maybe thinks I'm wrong.
King Maybe,
with love and hope and pain and nightmares,
and a lot of money down the drain.
The leader of nothing.....
So why do I let him influence me?
Still I'm right,
and I don't wanna go back
Love when?
King Nothing!

Drew Kristel

Neon signs flash and pulse,
Sirens and horns sound a symphony of rage in the street,
Electronic traffic guards flash green and red to
Hurry along the metal machines.
Cement sidewalks bear the brunt of
A million pounding feet.
Somehow a seedling has founded itself
Between cement slabs, but
Won't grow closer to the sun
In fear of the angry feet.

Night signs flash brighter and pulse deeper,
Now the feet cease the abusive pounding and
Calm to a gentle stroll.
The eyes that are held up by the legs are
Taken along to the signs and through the doors.
The eyes emerge later,
Wearied, vacant, and wandering.
The feet stumble and shuffle and
Bring the eyes to rest
On the sleepy seats of their metal machines.

Andrew Baldwin

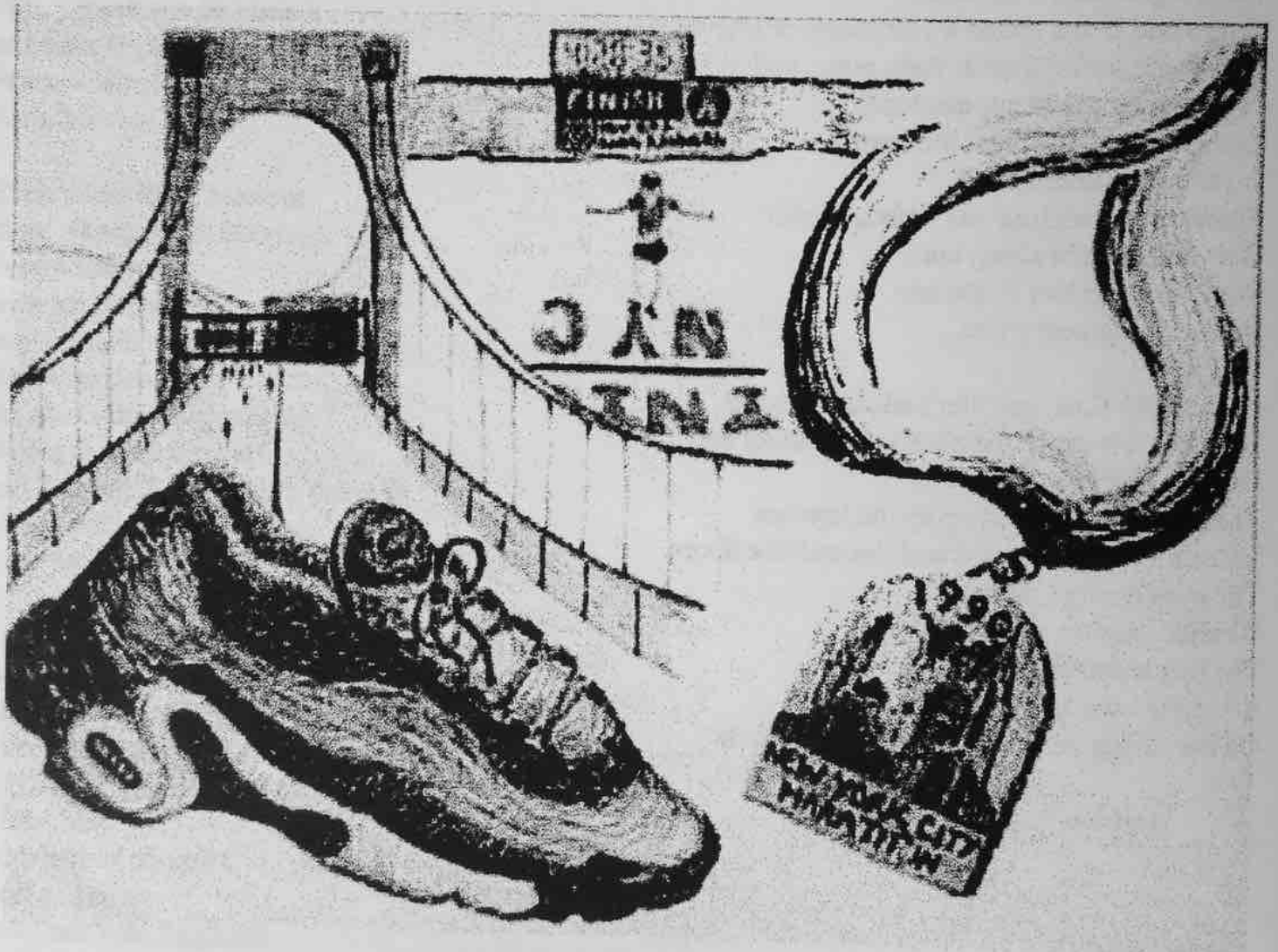
Nirvana Poem

I could live like that
dancing in front of my mirror all night,
listening to Ani explain life through her songs,
singing to the furniture in my room.

I could lay on my floor
and think about life
and what's good
and what I wanna change.

I could travel the world
and try new foods
and meet new people
and buy souvenirs from every truck stop I went to.

Kelly Kozma



Jill Ailes

Now and Then

Against a trimmed, verdant tree.
Sven and Longo lean on each other,
Forming an upside down "V".
Posing as they did three years ago.

Inside my heart tears apart,
As I take this shot of the two.

Long, tall, slender, baggy pants, no shirt
The most content person I know
Giving me thumbs up.
Do the best you can!

Sven, shorter, yet broad in shoulder,
Denim jeans, white t-shirt.
His perennial peace sign,
And a bitter, sweet grin!

Two people I will love and cherish,
Forever, like I have the last three years!

Tonight I'll kiss them,
Tomorrow I shall be gone.
On the plane, faraway,
I wave to them in pain!

Tina Ruzio

Sunrise

A light mist blankets the streets-
the sky is still dark.
The stars sparkle over my head like
the lights lining Broadway's streets.
The moon glances down with a
disapproving face.
I slip off my sandals and let the cold sand
seep between my toes.
The darkness disperses, leaving behind
a pastel sky of
ambers, peaches, and pearls.
Light azure and lavender follows,
soon accompanied by a small sliver of fire.
As the ball rises, there is an explosion of
bright pinks, violent oranges, and burning reds.
Warmth creeps out of its cozy bed and
soaks into my skin like suntan lotion.
The waves break gently against the sand,
softly calming with its steady rhythm.

Bethany Borghi

The Enlightener

I came out of a school bathroom and there he was.

The puffy hair remained. The laid back expression remained. It was like 10 years ago happened yesterday.

Then I began doubting myself. 'Was I just seeing things? Was he just a fictitious figure I dreamed about once?'

I decided to end my doubt with two words.

"Hey Mario."

He grinned. "Hey."

With that I finally had come to the realization that it was him. I was not delusional. Mario Tenaglia, my closest friend from nursery school, had crossed paths with me for the first time in 10 years. Our binding friendship had abruptly ended when we went to our separate elementary schools. Now though, we shared the same High School at CB East.

Before I saw Mario, I had experienced my first two months of high school and was ready to hail it a palace of failure. It didn't help that the percentage of names and faces I recognized in my own sophomore class barely exceeded five. The unfortunate and painful event of getting cut from the basketball team made my motivation even lower.

By seeing Mario that day, though, I felt somewhat enlightened. Just the memories of the times we had as preschoolers gave me chills. Together we owned the playground at Doylestown Methodist nursery school, chasing Reina Capodici and other females around the swing set. We liked to think the guys envied us. Our chemistry was eternal. I would go over his house and we'd play He-Man until dark, or until my mom picked me up, whichever came first. We'd do the same thing when he came to my house up on our awkwardly shaped hill. Neither of us was ever Skeletor, though, too scary of a character. Wherever we were I would almost always be in control of the activities we would do together. Mario never bothered to refute me. My sense of nostalgia also led me to believe that my adjustment to high school would go a lot smoother with Mario around again.

Mario was still only one student out of the 1500 that plagued the hallways of East, so I rarely saw him the rest of the year. I survived my sophomore year anyway, mainly because of my brilliant decision to join the track team and the best weekend of my life with the choir in Washington D.C. Ahead layed a landmark summer. I would get my license, assume ownership of my first car, AND experience my first accident. My first job would occupy the majority of my time though. I would spend 40 hours a week cleaning Linden Elementary school.

Not knowing whom I would be working with, I walked in the first day a little nervous. An Asian man greeted me first, and speaking grossly broken English pointed me down a hallway. I went all the way down the hallway, dazed and confused as to what I had to do, turned back . . . and saw Mario.

I didn't say anything at first because of my initial shock. Then I awkwardly said, "Mario."

"Hey."

"You workin' here?"

"Yep."

Thus the reunion was complete.

Mario and I, along with a 17-year-old kid from Archbishop Wood whom I'd known from Lenape, pretended to clean Linden that summer. We really ate, slept, and listened to the radio more than we dusted, vacuumed, and mopped. This allowed Mario and I to at least try to catch up on the last 10

years. His appearance hadn't changed at all, except for the fact he was two feet taller with his Afro puff included. His attire was dominated with T-shirts made popular by the 60's counterculture. As for me, I had grown a foot and a half, and my mop top blonde hair had become shaven brown, and the Gap dominated my attire.

When we actually did clean, Mario always controlled how we would go about doing it. I never bothered to refute him. If he said, "chill out, take it easy for a few minutes," I would, even if I had the last two inches of the chalkboard to wash. It wasn't long after several situations like this that I realized our role reversals compared to when we were five. I think we both knew, but we never mentioned it.

For the ten weeks on the "job" Mario and I rekindled our friendship from so long ago. He had become one of the most energetic people I had ever seen, and I found his energy to be contagious. During the summer he got me very much into the music of The Doors. I think the crazy antics he did when he played their CD's further increased my interest of them. He would jump off counters and desks and jump around the room for the fast songs, and then get all mellow for songs like "The End." Mario also got me more into literature than I every imagined I would be by giving me a copy of "Self Reliance." "This changed my life, man," he once told me. After reading it I could see why. While Mario scratched my back, I was able to scratch his as well. He took keen interest in me when I played around with the school's piano. He was amazed at how I could pick up melodies by ear and play them. Eventually he took up piano lessons.

The summer fizzled away, but its momentum carried into junior year. Mario and I saw each other more frequently and in the second semester shared three classes with each other. He was my lab partner in Chemistry, my homework partner in study hall, and we just plain had a blast in English. Throughout those classes we would reminisce about the summer and laugh in unison. He even returned to my house one night while working on an English project. It was the first time back since he was 5. "I remember that hill," he said as he pointed out to my backyard.

There is nothing more precious than friendship. Even if it takes a 10 year sabbatical. By reuniting with Mario in the summer of '98, I rekindled a close friendship from the past, causing a boost in my morale at a time that I really needed one. Mario brought something out of me that I had been missing since age five. He did it the same way I did to him a decade earlier. It would be foolish of me to think that any non-family member I've ever known impacted me more than him. He's been my own personal Voltaire. In June we'll graduate together (given that our GP's go smoothly), and move on with the same feeling of freedom we had only yesterday at Doylestown Methodist.

Todd Kohlhepp



This magazine is dedicated to the belief that the arts are a necessary and important force in our lives, and to the support of the young artists who bring them to us.



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