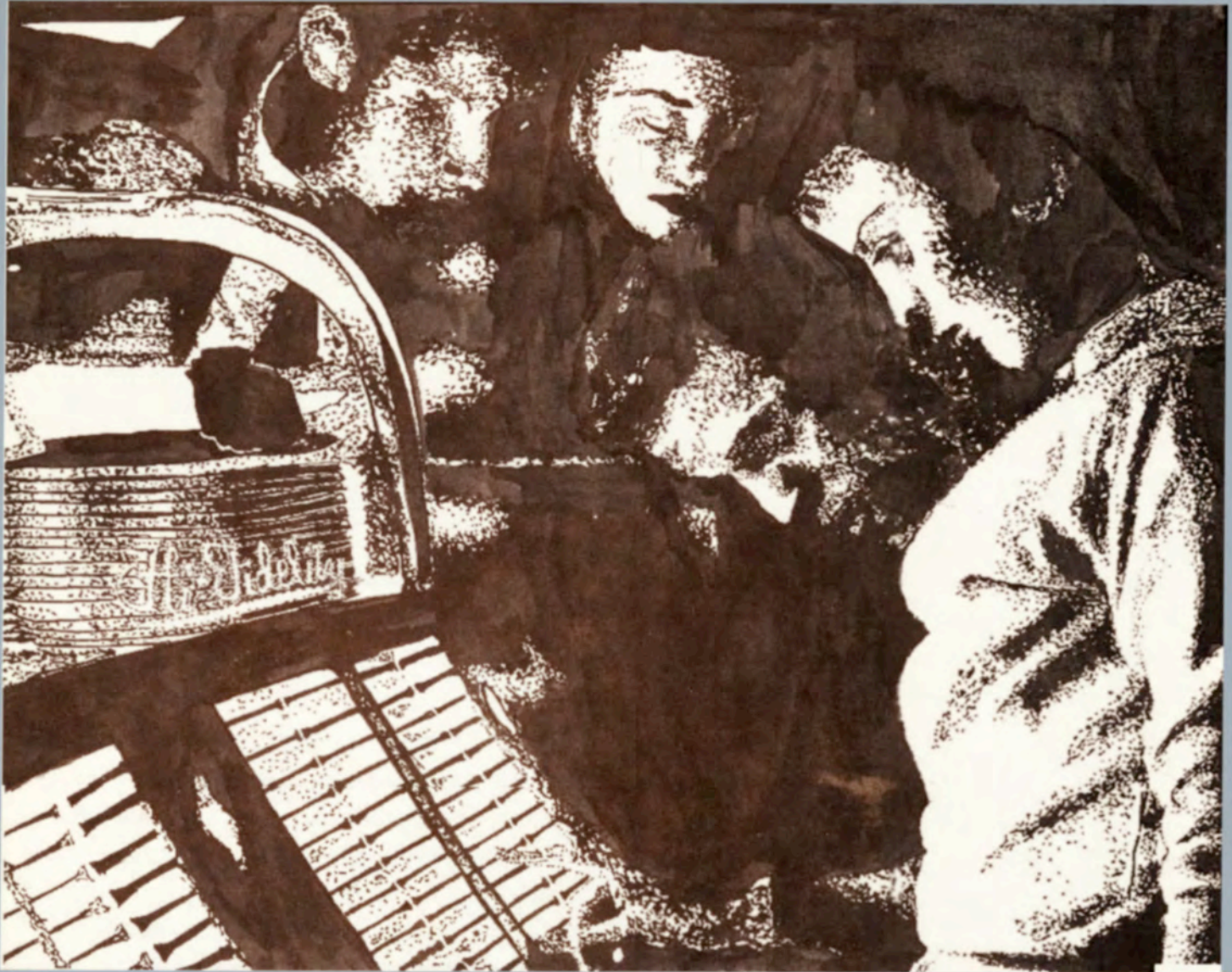


gardy loo

Volume V Issue 1



Harrisonburg Art School The N.U.M.B. Cisneros Reflections
Featured Artists Kelly Nichols and Jessica Surace

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All submissions are judged through a democratic process by the staff of gardy loo and are published based on the number of votes they receive, without exception. Anyone may become a member of gardy loo simply by attending our regular staff meetings.

Send submissions to one of the two addresses above. Include a cover page with name, phone number or e-mail, and a list of the works submitted. Please do not include your name on the works themselves. If you have specific questions and concerns about submitting artwork or photography, please write us, and we will get you in touch with the corresponding editor.

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Keeping it interesting: IMU student publications

Brianne Russell, ed.

We must grant the artist his subject, his idea, his donee: Our criticisms apply only to what he makes of it.

- Henry James

The loo is back and bigger than ever. I hope everyone enjoys our fall issue – we'll be having one longer issue per semester and a little more color from now until we're richer. So, I don't know, should we talk about money again? We've all heard a lot of talk about where student fees are being allocated on this campus. The construction of another bookstore (and not a library at least) in place of valuable parking spaces, as well as the elimination of eight award-winning athletic programs to make way for an imitation Tech have moved disappointed and angered students to action.

We've also heard much controversy over what a student publication's responsibilities are, such as providing an open forum for student expression, testing the limits of taste and expression, and expanding intellectual horizons by developing student consciousness and providing insight into the social situation in which our lives take place. Our student-run publications are also funded by student fees and so, must fulfill those obligations in order to be worthy of money that seems to be sprawled in many different, and not always deserving, directions.

As an Arts publication, we also have to live up to these expectations so that the university will continue to fund us, and we would like to know if we are.

Rather than ranting about the First Amendment, I would like to see students and faculty get to the real point of the issue. If we're going to talk about responsibility, we should be talking about the quality of the presentation of subjects chosen to be addressed in a publication, not just the offensiveness that resulted. We should talk about the audience, not just the authors. Should a student publication be at that level of sophisticated humor and intellect that an institution of higher learning should be? Obviously so. Should it insult its readers' intelligence if it is unsuccessful in using a form of literary composition? Should it defend itself and others by riding its high horse of morality while it's at fault if no one got the point it failed to make in the first place? Obviously not. For the most part, we are all intelligent people who do not want to be talked down to about our actions. If we are going to think about what is going on around us, we want to work for it, not have it fed to us in spoonfuls of obvious and overdone commentary.

As a student publication for the Arts, we want you to be challenged with what we present to you. We want students to express themselves artistically,

and we want others to respond intelligently. We don't want you to choose not to read our publication because it undermines your interests and potential. Different forms of the Arts, submitted by members of our student body, are able to reflect the social situation in which we live. We don't seek to create and then to force the situation and hand it back to our audience. If we did, we would be presenting you with a subject in a way that is not worth arguing about, and in effect, not going to change the situation or the way in which people evaluate it. In order to bring about real change, we have to go out into society and ask others for their interpretations, let them speak for themselves, view them in their natural environment, and not force them into a box of dull stereotypes. Then, we must present our findings to our audience in a manner that is open to more than one interpretation.

In other words, we don't want you to think that we're wasting your money. So read on, peruse. We'll respect your feedback if you have enough respect to read the magazine thoroughly. Let us know not whether or not the students we feature in this issue have a right to express themselves on a certain subject, or whether or not we have a right to publish them, but whether or not they (and we) are doing it well.

dear gardy-loo:

If I Could Write a Poetry . . .

If I could write a poetry, gardy loo, of my youth, it would beat with the rhythm of my wandering footsteps as I walked the dark streets of Harrisonburg at night. And walk I did: up and down and into bars, where new friends always waited to embrace me. And it would include running like a fawn through the Appalachian woods with my arms outstretched and sleeping under the cold watch of the stars with my head on my walking pack—a pack containing my entire collection of gardy loo magazines. Each one tucked tightly in, dog-eared and worn from adoration. For I carried these gardy loos with me wherever I went in my youth and they shared with me the sights and sounds in innocence: the pain of the rosebushes, gardy loo, that prick and tear at you when you crawl underneath them; the joyful darkness of the open basement window in that Mason Street house where no one ever seems to be home; the smell of pizza behind Pizza Hut, gardy loo, where they throw out the leftovers at the end of the night. If I could write a poetry, gardy loo, it would most certainly be published in your pages; and then I would have it to carry in my walking pack always. That is what you have meant to me. Thank you.

Timothy Hartman
Assistant Manager, Dollar General
Wolfe St, Harrisonburg, Va

Our Best Kept Secret

HEY GARDY LOO! I THINK YOUR MAGAZINE IS GRATE DONT CHANGE IT I MEAN BUT I WAS JUST WONDERING WHAT DOES YOUR NAME MEAN? I THINK ITS NICE DONT CHANGE IT BUT YOU DONT HAVE TO ANSWER IF YOU DONT WANT TO.
THANKS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

JAMES SHEFFIELD

Ed. Reply: A quick Altavista Internet search reveals that the name "Gardy-Loo" has its origins in the ancient Gaelic "Ghirrae Loe", which translates roughly as "Singing Warrior." The phrase later appears in 2nd century Rome where it was carried back across the Continent as a kind of "Storyteller" with the "deu" later added to the end of the first word to mean "Divine Storyteller." The ironic part

about this addition is that it seems the phrase was most widely understood not as high praise but slander—i.e., a fool who constantly makes things up in order to make himself seem closer to the gods or simply more important than he really is. From there the Franks make mention of a "Gerdeu Leau", or a person who always makes matters worse by refusing to admit his stories are nonsense. In 1066 William of Orange carried this phrase back across the Channel where it was picked up by the Brits and finally evolved to mean, literally, "a lot of shit." Once solidified the phrase became widely used as a warning to passerbys when the resident of a house emptied the chamber pot out the window. The current meaning lies somewhere around "watch the water" or "look out for the water" (meaning chamber-pot water.)

Aren't You Thinking of Someone Else?

Here's the deal. I know you guys over at Gardy-Loo took a lot of heat for your first issue this semester. Because of the Sex and stuff in it. But I don't want you to be upset. I'm not all stick up my ass and everything like those people. Not everyone is all Christian and cartoons and Barney! Controversy is hard to be a part of, I know myself what it is like to be ostrasized, don't!! People don't want to hear about Sex. They don't want to know about it. They just want it to go away. That's why America is so conservative. I mean, look at Bob Dole! He never has Sex! But I don't mind hearing about Sex. Maybe I'm weird like that! So I am looking forward to your next issue. Remember that the First Amendment is for everyone. There are lots of people in history who fought for the First Amendment and won just like you: George Washington, and Gandhi. Thank you for daring to be different.

Peter Dulaney

A Friend of the Arts

I have noticed that many of the more recent Letters to the Editor in gardy loo! have devoted themselves simply to praising the Arts at James Madison University—and the Arts in general. Leondard Mash, for example, writes: "It

is necessary and good that all students praise the Arts as one choral." What Leonard proposes is a wonderful thing. It pleases me to realize that many students have such a singular and boundless passion for the creative pursuits and it comforts me to know that artistic achievement will not die out with the next generation. Congratulations, gardy loo!, on helping so many students achieve this goal. And congratulations are also in order to many of the other artistic organizations around Harrisonburg that give vitality and emotion to painting, literature, music, and others. It would be nearly impossible to imagine a fulfilled artistic life without any of these mediums, and we are lucky to have so many sources in this area. At Dayton Tapes n' Traders, for example, on Route 42 just South of the Super Wal-Mart, any artist hungry for musical inspiration can dip his heels into truly beautiful savings on all used CDs, vinyls and accessories. We challenge you to come and find the most obscure music from the most independent bands in the industry today. And for a limited time, also, inspiration can be up to 25% off if you mention gardy loo! Be true to yourself and your voice; stop in today. Sorry, no personal checks.

E.S. Campbell
Owner and Manager, Dayton Tapes n'
Traders

Standing On Their Own

. . . of course there's a story behind all of them. There's a story behind everything. I understand that you want more explanations for your readers but I don't think that my telling you the stories right out would mean anything or make reading them any more significant. Instead take the time to investigate the details. And let's just say that I wrote them on a very quiet day when I had nothing to do and no obligations for any classes. You know those times: like small windows of silence that you can sit inside and feel. No responsibilities. No papers or tests or readings. No job schedules. No phone calls. Nobody crowing at you. No confident people in your ears. No talking. Just quiet emotions and the nurturing of something that will soon be strong enough to bring out into the noise and stand on its own. So here it is.

Dana Bartley
(published in Issue 2, Vol. 4)

Cisneros Article



Sandra Cisneros

Last year during Arts Week, gardy loo! and Culb Latino brought Sandra Cisneros, an acclaimed Chicana author and poet, to James Madison University and the Harrisonburg community. Her artistry celebrates many literary forms and includes published fiction such as *The House on Mango Street* (1983) and *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* (1991), as well as poetry *Bad Boys* (1980), *My Wicked Wicked Ways* (1987) and *Loose Woman* (1994). Her writing reflects more than just Latino and Latina life, but provides a voice to celebrate both the beauty and tragedy of the human spirit.

~~Reflections on Meeting an Artist~~

Gideon Twigg

Por los estudiantes—Books are power--read!

As I pass out copies of *The House on Mango Street* to each of my students, they grimace as if to say, "Not another book to read!" Amid the grimacing, I begin to tell them of the time that I actually met and had dinner with Sandra Cisneros. Like most people, I assumed a well-known author would have some pretense of arrogance, which she soon proved incorrect. As we ate and talked, her inner peace and open-mindedness amazed me. She offered her opinions on writing, race relations, motivating minority students, and so many other topics without ever sounding like her views were the ones that we should necessarily follow. Ms. Cisneros kept restating that everyone needs to find out what is right for them; the answers are never the same for all people. She made me feel like anyone could change the world if they truly wanted to. As my memory ends, we open the book and begin to read, and my students meet Sandra Cisneros for the first time.

*You got the impression,
standing next to her, that her
projected self, her whole identity
morphed so quickly that one had
to stand back and observe her
constantly to be sure that you
didn't miss an essential shift.*

~ Kristin Reed

Marisa Domenech

Memory is a collection of abstract perception in which one often intends to create an accurate portrait of a person or event but usually fails to divulge any single truth. I wish I could recall some wise insight that would reveal the secrets behind a brilliant writer and her masterpieces, which would ultimately bring a greater understanding to her readers and her critics alike. The remembered conversations throughout her visit reflect a broad range of subjects, including an hour-long discussion about dogs and cats. We also held conversations on our individual flower preferences; life in San Antonio and Chicago; interior decorating; the history and beauty of women's weaving; race relations, ancestry, genealogy; family and their strange habits; food; how academia often kills the writer and her voice; fate and destiny; and the circular patterns of life. To me, meeting Sandra Cisneros was not significant event because of the opportunity to speak to a great writer--which she is--not because of her celebrity status--which she deserves all praise and recognition--but because that weekend I found in Sandra Cisneros a unique, sweet, intelligent, kind-hearted, prophetic, brilliant, and child-like woman who unselfishly offers her mind and soul to the world both in writing and in person.

Brianne Russell

The deep humanity of Cisneros placed the details of organizing her visit at a sunken level. Her presence is powerful and astonishing because of her belief that people meet one another for very significant reasons. We all met her for our own reasons, which made our lives more meaningful; not only did she re-inspire me to write and express myself, but to value writing as a tool for breaking social barriers and building bridges in their place. Her life work has helped to fill the gap between the people in academia who study the work of Latino and Chicano writers and those who live the reality of what empowers that work.

Cisneros Article

Kristin Reed

My impressions of Sandra Cisneros are for the most part disjointed and undefined. A few things stand out--her constant stream of conversation in the car from Washington to Harrisonburg, her craving for red meat following the reading. I remember the way she transformed after we left her at the hotel. That afternoon she had been childlike and giddy, but before her presentation she had grown very still and private. You got the impression, standing next to her, that her projected self, her whole identity morphed so quickly that one had to stand back and observe her constantly to be sure that you didn't miss an essential shift. It was Cisneros's affect on the Hispanic youth that I remember most. As I watched her reading I could see she was giving something back to them that had been lost in a culture where language and identity is the source of constant struggle. I relinquished something that night as I saw her take literature from the hands of academia and, for a moment, restore it to the people for whom her books were written. Since that night I have realized that through literature Cisneros gave identity a new dimension. I gained an understanding that identity is shared, often in the strangest circumstances. Community can be created in the space between a woman on the stage and a child on the floor in front of her. Through that relation Cisneros gave those children possession of language and through that, an understanding of themselves. And so, almost a year later, that is the image of Cisneros that remains with me: the community and sense of identity which revealed itself to be so essential in Cisneros's writing and in Cisneros

*She had a power over the room,
over her words, over her
thoughts.*

~ Gideon Twigg

Monica Guzman

When I heard Sandra Cisneros was coming to speak to the Harrisonburg community, I was interested but did not know exactly who she was. When asked to translate her introduction to the audience in Spanish, I was nervous. After the reading, I was able to join Ms. Cisneros and some members of Gardy Loo for dinner. She told stories about how she became a writer. I was very shy at first but she asked me a few questions about my own experience as a Latino-American growing up in the United States. She encouraged me to continue to work hard. As we were leaving the restaurant she gave me a hug and said that she hoped one day someone would write a book about my father. I was shocked. I had never thought of myself as a writer but after that night I thought I just might try one day to write about my father. That evening she shattered all the rules I thought writing was all about. Structure and perfect sentences is not all writing is made of. She writes how she feels about memories, not just words but taste, smell and colors. I think she inspired many future writers that evening.

Matthew Ducker

I wonder why, when we meet artists, we expect them to be detached and irritable. Where did this perception come from? I understand that some artists do encourage this stereotype by being as cold and disagreeable as possible; but I wonder why when we went to pick up Sandra Cisneros we not only expected but knew--not only because she was an artist but a celebrity--that she would sit in the back, keep to herself and rise up out of her own fortress of silence just long enough to complain about the music on the radio or how our voices were keeping her from thinking clearly. It was a pleasant surprise to have our expectations shattered. I remember from her biography that she had once been a high school teacher--that kept reoccurring to me when I talked to her. That she looked like a teacher. And she talked like a teacher. She had a complete lack of condescension about her that testified to her experience in getting her hands dirty not with the utter dryness of indefinite literary challenge and rebuff but with people, of all types, and children, dirty as they can be. She had smile and a pragmatic honesty to her--all very unexpected. She had funny green glasses and a mousy little voice that made me think she should be in charge of arts and crafts at some local elementary school. I could easily picture her doing something like that: inviting the children in, giving them the yarn and the glue, showing them how to put their hearts and their minds on the construction paper in front of them. I remember sitting at dinner later that night with her and listening to her talk about writing, spirituality and structure and looking around to see everyone at the table with eyes wide, listening intently. We were all sitting like we were afraid to move or make a noise, like sponges drinking up the wise atmosphere and the good feeling she poured out from her place at the center of our attention.

Timothy Hartman

The Sandra Cisneros visit was a landmark for the Arts at JMU. A school the size of JMU should consistently sponsor big names in the arts, but we unfortunately have no institutional program for showcasing speakers semesterly, or even annually. The Cisneros visit occurred only because students committed themselves to consolidate the resources of numerous organizations, the community, and the university. It showed that we can create a vehicle by which JMU can consistently expose its student artists to their heroes and peers.

Photography

U n titled



N i k i H a m m o n d

Chris
Labzda



Untitled
Untitled

untitled

Jonathan Carrick

daydream, pride2= egotism
bound tightly again and again.
skin exposed- to the recedents
of my mind
-less and less
{stroke, stroke} paints his futile
mannerism,

blindfold
(fasten secure at all costs!)
one sense is nullified,
the others become
intensity
of
lunatic
-cycles-

circumnavigate,
they found it hard
b/c only she places
when i place,
soft sun yellow sail-
boat-sea-worthy:
vessel-less,
only longing
consume more,
reach out take
me in
inside
curvature-expanse-petals-nightshade.

Untitled

Emily Caulfield

Splash up against me, boy
rock me pretty,
drizzle down my sides
and pool, puddle around my feet, boy
crest above me boy,
over my head
while I yell to my soul
crash against my skull, boy
and send me swimming
suffocate me,
whirlpool me
pull me down and out, boy-
I'm drowning now—
splash up against me, boy
wipe me out
and drizzle drip down my sides.

THE *Mural* PROJECT (1941-1942)

[Reflections on Ansel Adams Photography]

Still Work. A lake suspended. Toes of snow capped mountains dangle in the water.
Such beauty. Pendent. Confined to a \$4.99 frame, and ornamenting a studio wall,
where its master— the omniscient art student-to-be reaches his fingers to graze the
treetops
but hits the glass.

And they all ask, "Did you take that shot?"
"No, I was never there."
(but I bought this splendor, so I call it my own)

If he ever were to see the mountain, in all its truth and COLOR—he would pass by—
Then snap a shot of a brick wall and call it artistic insight.

So it hangs there—a prostituted landscape.
And the beauty tries fruitlessly to evade the fame-
to move back to the negative-
(where its image was mirrored but pure)
and through the lens-
to inhale the brisk air of its natural home.
And gasp—

So it dreams there.
On the wall
in the studio
of the insightful art student.
Gasping and dreaming
Suspended beauty

JENN LOWRY

Featured Poet

Kelly Nichols

"I am a senior English major with a creative writing minor from Connecticut. I tried to pretend for a while that I wanted to major in something that would make me some money, then gave up to the fact that I love to write. I write to empty out my head. I hope my head makes some sense."

Medicated

i am slightly sick
like a pin prick
where that small
bulb of blood blooms
from its
tiny hole.

i am bare white room
naked hospital chair
beneath a sickening
flickering fluorescent
bulb

i am Eve's fall
inside my skull's walls
but my apple, that
small orange cylinder with
the POP top,
my sickly brain's umbilical cord,

pumps round after round
of blue pills
until empty
empty
empty

empty



Niki Hammond

cold steel Cutco
presses the fleshy belly of my arm.
i can see my smiling reflection in it.
blood creeps from my skin,
silent as folding t shirts or
goldfish in a bowl

and tree trunk thick.

night thoughts in the city

by Kelly Nichols

traffic pour by, thick like stout guinness
black streets under a blank moon, plum
wine sky you talk talk tongue the inside lip
of your glass for lips wrinkled like
small tree leaves
linens on lines in wind
original sin
you talk sigh lips' small folds
soft like socks for a hypnotizing watch tick
tick while you speak soft i think, rewind
before our violet night of wine shirts ties
bars outside-night-sighs to you, post -
shower pre-night out Sunday yellow
hair sticks up like damp with droplets
beads that hang on your bare back like babies on mothers legs
you dry and dress soft in white cotton silent as snow
straight your tie like old men—
my eyes wide at your lips they
hush wrestle words under the white
white milk moon white like white
socks white like water—
my eyes wide at your
lips they hush wrestle words under

Oil Spill

By Kelly Nichols

i could not move to close my young ears
unwanted deep ears to hear
the front door creep open and
the low bellowing authority spill
like oil from the officer's lips...

"You're lucky he's alive ma'am...straight
through the windshield ..."

i pretended sleep though my eyelids flipped open like
sleeves-too-short or shades at dawn
a hot brick choked my chest
seared my short breath
muffled my heart to a dull thud thud
my mouth shut, teeth tight as steel prison bars
that wired my tongue taut

but my mother, she knew I was listening
when she brought me to see him in that room,
his bedroom that oozed a dark blue and forced my
movements s l o w like the officer's oiled words
"You're lucky he's alive..."

my heart unfolded when my mother said "it's a miracle he's only scratched..."

he lay still.
i do not remember his face.
i did not really know what was going on.
but I knew to cry
only could cry
want to cry
cry

and lay my small self on his
unharmed barrel chest as he asked

"Why are you crying?
Why are you crying?
Why are you crying?"

until my tears pooled a puddle by his neck

iseeyou



Matt Carasella

Harrisonburg

Pickin' Berries and

In the twentieth century, students at the Sorbonne in Paris revolted against their administration. The social premise of the protest was "situationalism," a movement that questions conventional values in contemporary society. These French students sparked a revolution of sorts among the people, and the country saw its citizens go on strike in the weeks that followed. The whole nation asked themselves the same question: Are we going to put up with this nonsense? When applied to the Arts, situationalism works to devalue commercialized and fame-based artistic statements and revalue interdependence and reciprocity between artist and viewer.

Years later, in another city that hits much closer to home for most of us, situationalism is a foundation for an innovative arena for the arts. A creation that embodies the belief that art means more than a big price tag, The Harrisonburg Art School digresses from the traditional style of teaching art to a more situational style, according to Vince Hedger, who heads the school. He says, "At the school, we are going to ask ourselves over and over again: Are we going to put up with this nonsense?" Hedger is referring to the impeding concern with money and fame that artists face in commercialized art, which is rooted in the traditional style of artistic education. "We don't need more classrooms. The Art School should be the same as being alive. Why should we be a student just because we have enough money or are a certain age?" asks Hedger.

There are stark differences between the Art School and an art class one would find in JMU's Duke Hall. "For Harrisonburg, this is pretty cutting edge," says Hedger, who wants the school to be a place that is open all the time and wants to see all the space used to its maximum capacity for any creative flow of consciousness, envisions it as "a place to study art with commitment and passion of pursuing the idea of 'what-I-am-doing-is-what-I-want-to-do -and-not-about-pleasing-people-but-to -express-something-real-and-extremely-significant'."

Brought up in Alaska, Hedger moved to Paris in 1996, which he says is "the seat of so many avante gard art movements. You can see the work of Picasso and many others and you can go where all the art is still alive. In Paris, there was this seven story building and since the squatting laws are different [than the ones in the U.S.], people had moved in and invited artists from all over to do their art there. Since they treat you to due process, you can stay there for a pretty long time." While in Paris, Hedger met a JMU graduate who frequently talked about Harrisonburg, and the two eventually came to Harrisonburg together, while continuing to travel to other parts of the country. On his second trip to the 'burg, Hedger had "one of those epiphany moments. I knew there would be some kind of writing project here, and I spent nine months on that project."

Hedger stayed in Harrisonburg and found about a "4,600 square foot



space with no windows people thought was useless" on North Main Street. With the ideas of situationalism and reciprocity fresh in his mind, he worked with the school on and off for two years, renovating the building that is now open to all as the Harrisonburg Art School. Hedger uses himself as an example of how it all works. While he was working to create the school, Hedger was not paid, and his labor became sweat equity. Now, the owners of the building provide him with the space to do his art projects as he continues to renovate and use the building for artistic purposes. "The idea is to give something to the space to use. That way the space is self-sufficient. It is an economic arrangement. Where do I fit in and what gifts can I contribute?"

The school is based on many ideas Hedger picked up in Paris as well as in

Art School

Paintin' Them Too

by James David

the city of Montreal, which he uses as an example of what the Art School might spark in the Harrisonburg community. "In Montreal, schools like [the Harrisonburg Art School] are everywhere. The artists in Montreal and the students in Paris never achieved personal celebrity. That wasn't the point. The same holds true for the Art School. It is more about free statement that takes one to a different level of consciousness. The ethic of the Art School is not about fame. It is about life being perfect and having the ability to create freely," he says. These ideas and questions stem from the idea of situationalism, which asks artists to view the world differently than commerce-based Western civilization. Hedger explains, "It is all about independence, self awareness and being condemned to act consciously as opposed to just doing what you are taught. It is about stopping and examining life values."

Situationalism involves celebration and collaboration separate from Western values of money and fame that take place within a communal environment. Hedger feels that taking artists out of the commercial world enables them to create something that everyone can enjoy. "Price tags mean only certain people can feel [the art] if they have enough money. Art needs to be equal opportunity. If you put a price tag on it, art becomes nothing but a pretty picture and loses its opportunity." Hedger views talent as something everyone can utilize and not something that has a "recognized market value."

With commercial talent in the Western

art world, also comes fame. Inevitably, society reveres the person for his or her gift and not the gift itself. Many times those who pursue social prominence receive acclaim that is disproportionate to what they have contributed" says Hedger, who thinks that the school should promote the actual gift that its pupils offer and not the pupils themselves. The school finds its inspiration in the spiritual rather than

"Art needs to be equal opportunity. If you put a price tag on it, art becomes nothing but a pretty picture and loses its opportunity."

- Vince Hedger

the monetary. "Situationalism takes art out of commerce and into the realm of the mystical, even religious," Hedger explains, using the idea behind Native American "spirits" to exemplify the ways in which he wants the school to function. "Native Americans believe that our ancestors are alive now. The Native Americans did not make shrines to people but to the spirit of that person. With art, that spirit will well up in a person and that person will make a monument to that spirit. Thinking like this will make the person humble. There is no desire or need to be better than anyone. Everyone will be transfixed. The spirit brings things

together as a vessel from which eternity speaks. This holds true for artists whose school will focus on the passion with which something was created and not the person who created it." Ideally, the Harrisonburg Art School will help artists to understand how broad eternity is and to connect to the natural world and its resources.

Along with strong emphasis on the natural and spiritual realm in situationalism, artists like Hedger place value on reciprocity between all things. Hedger believes solidarity in art is similar to karma. "It comes from the premise of wiping the earth clean. Then, we ask ourselves how did we get here? We realize the great mother Earth supplies us with everything we need. How are we going to live? Are we going to live in a way to honor this gift?" Reciprocity answers those questions and becomes the way one honors earthly gifts. "In reciprocity we (continued on page 17)

do not take more than we need and we are consciously aware of where it came from. All hell breaks loose when you make a pig out of yourself. People have forgotten their place.

Situationalists get back to authenticity and purity because they use reciprocity." Hedger summarizes collaboration in the art world as pulling your own weight. "Artists just can't paint berries, they have to pick them too."

The school applies these ideas on a pragmatic level. To achieve and maintain this principle, it moves to create an environment where "the spirit of art" can flourish. It is important

Photography

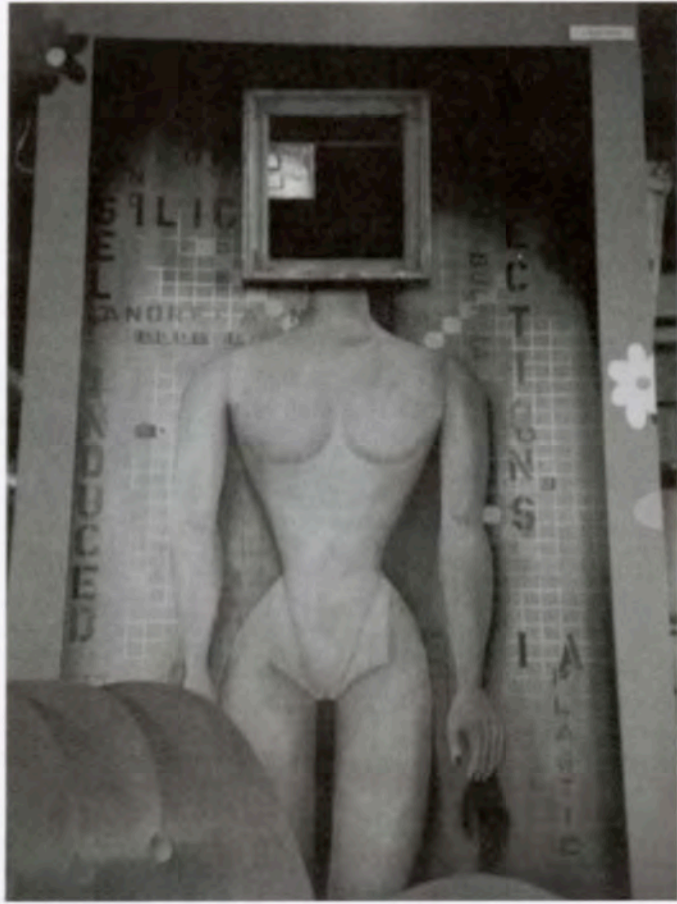


Untitled
Xris Thomas

Arts School

to listen and to communicate and provide constructive criticism, according to Hedger because art is like any form of communication. Thus, the school has a fluid set up, a place where "sooner or later ideas gain momentum." There are no classrooms, just spaces to unleash creative juices in a free and supportive environment. With that momentum, the pupils will, as Hedger explains, "try to add [their] voice. At the school you can be passionate and devote hours and hours to your work."

The school does not require a membership and so will not cost money for someone to be a part of it. Hedger feels "you learn more from [a diverse group of] people than a textbook. We just needed a school with more collaboration." Reciprocity will keep the Harrisonburg Art School independent and communal, everyone sharing their work with all other participants. Hedger invites all to come and join him and many other artists in sharing with each other in order to gain knowledge and freedom, nothing more, nothing less.



Examples of shared art produced by students of the school

Where: 421 N. Main St. (or 32 Gay St., across from shopping center)

When: anytime, door's open

How much: free

Why: to be part of a collaborative environment that honors the art more than the artist

Contact: contact Vince Hedger at The Artful Dodger in downtown Harrisonburg: 432-1179, 47 Court Square



Packed in the pews
We tried not to touch.
Kept knees and elbows tight
To avoid sticky contacts.
Sweat soaked, we sat,
My cousins and I.
Jon tugged his tie,
Beth fanned skirt folds,
Mark wrestled his jacket,
And we squinted through
Dusty beams of mosaic light,
To the pulpit and the preachers
We stood above Mimi
Adorned in the dress.

She brought the dress a year-ago.
A year-ago last month.
Her grand-mother-of-the-bride dress.
Powder Pink, she called it.
Old Lady Pink, we said.
Is this color okay?
Does it match my skin?
Do I look too pale?

The sleeves and the skirt were a gossamer chiffon.
They fluttered when she walked,
Reminded me of butterfly wings and
Cool ocean breezes breathing on white linen shirts
Hung to dry in the afternoon sun
On the coast of St. Somewhere.

The skirt is too long.
It needs to be hemmed.
Oh, now I think it's too short.
I need to sit down.

You can pin up the rest in one minute Deary,
The bodice almost matched her bathroom curtains,
The ones that never really kept any light out,
Only played shadow puppets with Aurora,
Threw delicacies on the marble linoleum
Like intricate etchings on ancient church-yard mausoleums.

Do you think I'll be too dressy?
I think I'm going to be too dressy.
I think it's all the lace.
There's too much lace it makes me too dressy.

The Dress

Brooke
Cashman

The wedding was a year-ago.
A year-ago last week.
She sat right there in the
Pew in front of me
(I could touch it now)
In her Powder Pink dress
Her Old Lady Pink dress.
Packed in the pews
We tried not to touch.
Kept knees and elbows tight
To avoid sticky contact.
Sweat soaked, we sat
My cousins and I.
Jon smiled beside his bride,
Beth fanned train folds,
Mark escorted Mimi down the aisle,
And we squinted through
crystal beams of mosaic light
To the pulpit and the preacher
Who stood above Jon and Amy
In their fairy-tale apparel,
In front of Mimi
Adorned in the dress.

Remaining rays of sun fought an
Infantile battle to
Continue climbing through
Stained glass,
And as last light
Caught the copper casket,
I wondered how long the search
Would have gone on
For the dress
The
Dress
If she'd known how long
She'd be wearing it.

IF I WERE ON THE MOON KATIE KING

If I were on the moon
floating up there on a helium balloon
I could laugh at my hollow existence
But down here on land,
peace of mind takes persistence.

La jeune fille sits alone,
biting her nails down
to the painful quick.
Her tired, inky eyes shift.
She wears a necklace
of bleeding hearts,
like the flowers,
only not so alive.
Now she sits,
waiting alone,
for the next in line.

LA JEUNE FILLE ACCOUNDEE JESSICA WRIGHT



Untitled – Niki Hammond

Q

Jeremy Coulson

Poor Q, what can be said about him?
Leaning on his crutch;
Without his buddy "U," he doesn't mean much.

pretty

by
Verity Caron

A little girl sat daintily on the rusted swing of the play-set. It had been in the front-yard for over twenty years, but she'd never played within its distorted metal frame. Yet the dingy plastic swing seat was the best place to sit if she wished to remain clean like her mommy told her to. So here she sat, on her rusty swing-set, cautious not to move and get her dress smudged.

The dress was a gift from her new Aunt Lorna. The shoes were too. The girl took great pride in such a wonderful, extravagant present.

The Mary Jane shoes still shone with a perfect glossy black finish, and the white stockings still gleamed white and fresh, with no snag marring the little red hearts that spattered the surface.

The dress frilled out at the knees, all red and white ruffles tamed into orderly waves. The sleeves echoed the hem, while the rest of the dress was white and tied at the waist with a red ribbon.

Her mommy loved the color red.

Only a single swing of her little leg showed the contained excitement of the girl. The street before her rested in the pre-dawn light, completely still. This suburban neighborhood was far older than the swing-set and showed similar signs of wear. Yellow tape held together a fence at an abandoned house on the corner, and the house that she had watched while waiting for her Aunt's arrival had just now become quiet. Her mommy didn't like the loud banging noises that came from there.

Her mommy liked silence; noise hurt her head.

So the little girl stayed silent.

Her hair, put up and curled with care enough to match the pristine dress, began to glow golden as the sun came up. The dew had damp-

ened the curls so that they did not bounce quite right when she moved her head to watch the approaching cars.

The first car was shiny and black like her shoes, and did not match the condition of the neighborhood. The next was both white and black, with a seal in red on its door. One of the lights on top was also red.

Words floated into the still dawn air as the car doors opened. Her new Aunt Lorna stepped out of the black car and a man in a uniform came out of the other one. The girl had never seen him before, though she recognized his uniform vaguely. She watched her Aunt's hesitant steps, smiling hopefully.

"...she is now." Aunt Lorna barely glanced at her, looking instead towards the screen door of the house. "Her mother must be inside..."

The girl started to shake, tears coming into her eyes. She didn't like the new dress! Her Aunt didn't think she was pretty! Was it a smudge she had missed, was her hair out of place? Wasn't she clean enough?

She stayed silent; her mommy didn't like noise.

The man looked at her, saw the damp hair, the clasped hands so white that they matched the dress. He moved forward, kneeling before the silent child with a comforting smile.

Her eyes did not part from her new aunt, who looked about at the filth in distaste. Her blue lips opened, betraying the sound of her chattering teeth.

"Lorna, look at this!" The man said in alarm. Lorna came and knelt before the girl as well, curious, then gasped.

"Oh! Aileen, dear, what's wrong?" She cried, gathering the girl heedlessly into her arms. The dress snagged on a rusty chain and made a wet sound as it ripped. She'd sat there so long that the dew'd soaked the dress clear through.

"Am I pretty? Am I clean enough? Don't you want me?" She asked, gulping to hold back the tears. Her face contorted with misery.

**Her mommy liked
silence; noise hurt
her head. ... So the
little girl stayed si-
lent.**

"Of course, Honey!" Lorna hugged her close again, sharing an alarmed look with the man over her head. He stood and entered the screen door solemnly.

It, like everything else, was rusty from years of salt tears, and creaked loudly in protest.

Only moments later it creaked once more, this time more urgently. The man stumbled out, face white again as the little girl's dress, the muscles under tight, rigid control.

Lorna stood, rocking the girl in her arms like a baby. "What?" She asked.

The stillness of the street was now sinister to the girl. She began to cry harder, not quite sure why.

The man shook his head, adding another

depth to the silence. Just as dawn came to the street, horror dawned on Lorna's face.

Her mother had dressed her little girl up for her "new Aunt," and told her to wait outside and not get dirty. She needed quiet time if she was going to get some sleep.

The pills were her mother's favorite color.

"Go ahead, Lorna. I'll call this in," he said.

The little girl was placed down and she solemnly took her aunt's hand. As she was hurried to the shiny black car, Lorna talking to dispel the awful quiet, her stiff legs could not keep up and scuffs appeared on her shiny new shoes.



Riomaggiore # 1

Rusty Carlock

Want to
SUBMIT TO
GARDY LOO
For Our
Spring 2001
Issue?

(see the back inside
cover for details)

Something Inside

Something Inside

By Rusty Carlock

Mr. Charles,

As I drove into town this morning I lifted my eyes from the cracked concrete of the road to the dark blue outline of the mountains against the sky. It was early, and the morning sun illuminated the cold but did not disperse it. I had been staring at the road and the cars and watched mist pour from exhaust pipes and swirl outside my window like billowing smoke from coal factories. I drove over a ridge and the cityscape of gas stations and cheap stores made me think of you.

While I sleep in my small, unfurnished apartment, you plague my dreams. You are like a father who died before I was born. I wish you were dead. I wish it were that easy. But you live and I feel your presence like a gaping hole in my consciousness.

But I looked up and saw the mountains. I imagined deer jumping through fallen leaves upon their slopes. I saw moss-covered stones jutting from the earth, forming ravines through which creeks cascaded, providing water for the skunks and squirrels who gathered at their banks to lap cold water gently upon their pink tongues.

One day I will travel to those mountains. I will take food and blankets and sleep in the forest until I die. But this morning I kept driving. I

Joe slaves upon his work day after day and when I watch him leave for the factory each morning I think he seems like some kind of happy beast, like a yak or a shaggy llama, the way he climbs into his dilapidated truck, smiles, and waves to me as he pulls out of the driveway and smoke pours from his exhaust pipe.

went to work because the car parts had to be built and I ground metal against metal until the tiny shards in my skin made my hands look like copper. I don't know where you are, but I will find you. I have memories. I've done things that can't be forgiven. I have to see you before I go to the woods. My mind is slipping. Your faithful servant,

Dolge

Mrs. G. on her life.

I am a woman who lives amidst the daily chaos of a working household. My husband's name is Joe and he's a foreman at Walker Manufacturing, where they make auto parts. Joe slaves upon his work day after day and when I watch him leave for the factory each morning I think he seems like some kind of happy beast, like a yak or a shaggy llama, the way he climbs into his dilapidated truck, smiles, and waves to me as he pulls out of the driveway and smoke pours from his exhaust pipe. He leaves me alone here with Phillip.

Every afternoon, Phillip comes home from the abandoned quarry with mud festering deep in his clothes. Him and his friends swim in the cold water that stays trapped in the quarry just down the road. He comes back telling me about his friends and the rocks and the fish. He's always muddy and I always beat him. But it's not what you think. I say I beat him, and I do. I beat him hard. But I'm not that kind of woman. I take Phillip and lay him on the bed, then I take his daddy's belt and I

slap it against his bare skin until I see it rise with redness. Phillip's little face will twitch in pain but while it's happening it's like I'm not there. I feel like I'm watching a movie with me playing an abusive parent. I see it happening but I can't do anything; and I don't want to do anything, until it's over. When Joe and Phillip are gone, I sit here at my window and look out at the mountains. It's then, while I'm looking at the mountains, that I feel like a person again. I feel the pain and the guilt. But when Phillip steps in the door, mud streaks following his shoes across the floor, I grab the belt and begin again.

Today I tell myself it will be different. Our home rests on a hill that looks down on the interstate, but beyond the interstate there is a big blue patch of mountains that sit on the horizon like giant blue whales lying beached and dead on some shore. Between the interstate and the mountains, there are long stretches of green fields with calves grazing along the perimeters of electric fences. Last week there were mammoth bulls and cows slamming their hooves into those fields but I awoke one day to find they had been replaced by calves. Butcher day, I guess. They all went to the slaughter.

When I look out the window these mornings, I think about my parents. Their head stones poke out of the base of the mountain that begins to rise in our backyard. I try to picture

their faces but I can't. They don't exist. They don't exist except for those two stones with their names in the backyard. Damn my memory. I try to picture their faces or hear their voices or even remember what kind of food they liked, or what kind of music, but there's nothing. It's like my life is a fog.

The fog rolls into the valley on nights when the cold turns sticky. On those nights the cold clings to you so that even after you get someplace warm, you shiver and rub your arms for a good while before you feel thawed. The people who live here in the valley have a name for the fog. It's called "The Black Tide." They call it that because it's so thick it's like water and when it comes nobody can see and sometimes the cows fall into ditches. Some people say the fog's bad luck. They say it's not natural. Some nights when the fog comes I feel dizzy, and then I'm inclined to agree with the folks who say the fog is some sort of evil. The weatherman says the fog's supposed to come down on us tonight.

Dolge, on his town.

The tallest structure in my town is a dog food factory, and I think that's fitting. Our town isn't vain enough to build huge buildings in honor of government or capitalism. Instead, in our town, the only ideal that holds enough meaning to entitle a building higher than four stories is the production of quality dog food. The only other

significant structures in town are the confederate war monument and the old courthouse.

The town sprouts up between two mountain ranges, one to the west and one to the east. The mountain ranges form a protective embrace around the small town and the hard but affectionate touch of mountains breeds a tough but warmhearted people. No one here makes a lot of money. We all work at places like Walker Manufacturing making auto parts, or Klipsco Dog Food, packing dog food pellets into big bags.

I say everyone works at these types of factories but there is a small part of the town's population that makes its living in a much different trade: academia. Five years ago, an old farmer named Schifflet died and left his property to the state. The state sold the property to a corporation that began construction on a small private college. The owners of the college believed the school's out-of-the-way, scenic location would be a sure way to win impressionable youths into the halls of their school. Sure enough, the college was built and attracted all sorts of interesting kids who quickly bombarded our quiet town.

Suddenly, there were half a dozen pizza shops. There was a tattoo/piercing parlor and several music stores that sold music most people had never heard of. Downtown, there was a new coffeehouse that served as a gathering place for the
(continued on page 26)

Featured Photographer

Jessica Surace

Chances are, you've seen Jessica Surace's photography many times before. She has worked for four years at JMU Photography Services, the office in charge of photographing campus events for campus publications and promotions. Among her favorite events to photograph are sports events. "I just love the excitement and energy that prevails at sporting events like Basketball and Soccer games. I also really like the challenge of trying to get the perfect shot while all the players are moving and changing direction so quickly. It's really a rush when you know that you've captured it! Jessica is currently a senior SMAD major, and after JMU, she hopes to find a position as a photo journalist. "I use photography as my medium to tell a story. There is so much you can convey in a image, it can be so powerful." As is evident from these few examples of her extensive portfolio, she certainly succeeds in capturing the power of an image.



Featured Photographer



Something Inside

most eccentric of the college kids. It was called "The Bull's Eye."

Somehow, we adjusted. The students became as routine as the fog that rolls over the valley once a week. Grandma May, the proprietor of a salon downtown, was no longer appalled by the spiked, punk rock haircuts she was required to produce on a regular basis. She hummed "Dixie" in the same, cheerful manor when she did the hair of the lead singer of the punk band, Radiated Crayfish, as she did while trimming the beard of Reverend Jones.

Dolge, on his meeting with Mr. Charles.

It was in the coffeehouse, "The Bull's Eye," that I first met Mr. Charles. I had begun going to the coffeehouse in the evenings to escape from the noisy grinding of my work and the lonely emptiness of my apartment. I watched the college kids tumble up to the coffee bar and order eccentric drinks I knew nothing about. The walls of the house were painted in odd, flat colors, like those you would find on the back of a lizard in the desert. Postmodernist paintings hung on the wall with their crazy lines and shapes. I tried to make sense of them but their meaning eluded me, as did the meaning of the poems in the literary magazines that were left upon the tables. The furniture was dark and jagged but comfortable.

Some evenings, a jazz band with a blind drummer played, and I listened intently to their pointed but soothing rhythms.

One evening, as I was sipping upon a hot chocolate, a man wearing a dark overcoat carefully lowered himself into an empty chair at my table. He was an older man, with silver hair. His nose pointed down, as if indicating the importance of

A feeling of profound excitement passed through me. I wanted to learn more from this man. I felt like I had been in a coma for twenty-five years and was just beginning to wake up. I needed this man to tell me who I was.

the words which may emanate from his mouth. He was thin and carried a cane, though he seemed to have little need of it when walking. His chin was pointed and his face was long. His deep, green eyes seemed to dance in their sockets.

He said, "My name is Mr. Charles. May I sit with you for a moment?"

It had been a long time since I had spoken with someone outside of work. He made me feel uncomfortable and I did not want him there. I looked around and realized there were no other seats open in the shop. The jazz band was playing and many of the students had come to see the show.

"Sure," I said.

He told me he was an

English professor at the college and when he asked me what I did I was ashamed to tell him. He only nodded when I told him about the factory and the auto parts. He asked me if I liked my job and I was surprised. I was surprised that this man would care whether or not I liked my job. I told him my job was my work and I couldn't see it as anything else, enjoyment or otherwise.

His eyes were bright with intelligence. For a moment he listened intently to the improvisations of the bass player in the jazz band, then he looked up at me suddenly and began to talk.

First he told me about the college: the dull monotony of the same students wearing different faces in his

classes; the redundancy of administrative actions, constantly changing things to maintain the status quo; the cramped, stuffy office given to him because of his progressive ideas and unconventional teachings. He talked of the absence of a family in his life and the cool freedom it allowed him. He told me about the places he had traveled: Tierra del Fuego, Nairobi, Biarritz. He told me of harems in the Middle East and revolts in Asia. His words kindled my imagination. As he talked to me over the wandering rhythms of the jazz, I imagined spiral tiers of Hindu temples filled with esoteric inscriptions of magic. He began to talk about philosophy and literature. It seemed as though he was talking to

himself. I listened intently. It was strange. I had never heard anyone talk like him before. I didn't say a word as his ideas spilled out across the table and into my mind. I saw everything through his eyes. He explained the literary significance of the short story and its dark power of expression and I understood. I understood what he was saying.

We talked for most of the evening until "The Bull's Eye" closed. I saw more of the world in our conversation than I had seen previously in my twenty-five years. As we left the coffee shop he turned to me suddenly.

"Dolge." He said.

"Yes?"

"How would you like to be a participant in some personal research I've wanted to conduct for some time?"

A feeling of profound excitement passed through me. I wanted to learn more from this man. I felt like I had been in a coma for twenty-five years and was just beginning to wake up. I needed this man to tell me who I was.

"Ok."

"Great. I'll give you my office number and you can call me when you get off work tomorrow." He smiled and extended his hand, which I shook with force.

Mrs. G, on her condition.

The sun streams into the kitchen in the morning like warm ambrosia poured straight from the hands of God. I sit before the window, drink my coffee,

and close my eyes to the soft warmth of the light. This morning, as I lay in the sun, I weep. Last night Joe came home from work and he no longer looked like a happy, shaggy llama. He looked like a man, worn and haggard. Something had happened at the factory. He told me of a man named Min-Soo who he worked with.

Min-Soo was from Vietnam and could not speak English. The other men at the factory didn't associate with him much because they could not communicate with him. Still, Min-Soo was a hard worker and the men respected that. They didn't know how he had come to work at Walker Manufacturing. They speculated about his past: was he a refugee from some war; was he working to earn the money that would pay for his children to take a boat out of Vietnam; or maybe he was an illegal alien who was trying to escape from his past. Min-Soo was a subject the men brought up in conversation when there was nothing else to talk about.

Yesterday, Min-Soo was repairing a part of the wall in the factory. He fell from a scaffolding three stories up. Joe heard the thump of the man hitting the floor but when he turned to see what had happened, Min-Soo was already standing with his hand pressed against his head. There was a small puddle of blood on the floor. All of the workers quickly ran to Min-Soo to see if he was ok. Min-Soo had taken a piece of newspaper from off the

floor and was holding it to his head. He was mumbling in Vietnamese but no one could understand him. The workers called the rescue squad and waited.

When the rescue workers showed up they asked what had happened, but Min-Soo spoke in Vietnamese and the factory workers hadn't seen the fall. One of the rescue workers thought Min-Soo was speaking Spanish so he stumbled over a few words to see if he could get a response, "Tienes dolor?" but Min-Soo spoke loud Vietnamese in reply, as if in anger. The rescue worker shrugged his shoulders "He doesn't speak Spanish."

One of the factory workers said, "He's from Vietnam."

The rescue worker reached for the newspaper against Min-Soo's head and removed it. After the newspaper was gone, he could see Min-Soo's brain. There was a ragged hole in the head that was framed with sticky black hair. "Oh shit," he said. "We've gotta get outta here." They put Min-Soo on a stretcher and the ambulance sped away. A couple hours later, Joe heard Min-Soo had died in the emergency room.

Last night, I lay in bed with Joe and held him while he cried. I stroked his hair and whispered in his ear until he fell asleep. My breast was wet with his tears. I thought about Min-Soo and the tragedy of his death. What were his dreams before he came to America? As a boy in Vietnam, had he dreamed of dying in an American auto-parts factory? I had never

Something Inside

met Min-Soo, but I felt I knew him. His hopes, or maybe their ineffectiveness, are mine. I thought of Phillip and my guilt, and the pain the guilt causes in my chest. I thought of my anger. I'm angry at my parents for being dead, and I'm angry at Phillip for having been born. But sometimes, after he falls asleep, I go in his room and see his light, tousled hair in wisps around his face, and I love him. The love makes the pain worse and my heart becomes swollen with grief, and I get sick and have to lie on the ground, and I try to become the absence of feeling.

This morning, the light feels like heavy feathers falling on my face.

Dolge, on his sessions with Mr. Charles.

The sessions began simple enough. I would meet with Mr. Charles in his office after I got off work. He had me read literature and then he wanted me to talk about what I read. He said he wanted to understand the influence a person's socioeconomic place had on their interpretations of literature. He believed new insights could be gained into the great works if they were read from perspectives different from that of conventional academia. I read Shakespeare and Chekhov and Hemingway and O'Connor. I learned about things I didn't know existed. Mr. Charles told me I was more astute and eager to learn than most of his students at the college.

I went to the factory each day and ground metal,

all the time pretending I was talking with the professor. I would hold long discussions with myself and give each discussion a name, like "Death in the Bible," or "Murder's Place in Gothic Literature." I pretended I was intelligent, and began to believe I was intelligent. I found myself memorizing Mr. Charles' words and repeating them in my mind to pass the day at work. I would repeat things like "Evil is a manifestation of freedom. Without it, we are slaves." I spoke with my coworkers even less than before and withdrew into a quiet shell where I could contemplate the world I had been introduced to.

We spent weeks on Poe. Together, we explored the dark side of human nature with which Poe was obsessed. I read modern horror novels and Mr. Charles told me why people need to explore their fears of human evil. We studied St. John's Revelation and examined the need for death, for a drastic and tragic ending that drives humanity to fulfill its fleeting moment of destiny in life. Mr. Charles thought Wallace Stevens was a genius. He thought that death made everything beautiful. The man opened my eyes to a new world. I felt him pushing me to some threshold where, once on the edge, I would have to jump blindly and trust the subtle force of his hands.

Dolge, on his introduction to the woman.

I sat with Mr. Charles in his parked car and

watched the window of a house on the top of a hill that overlooked the interstate. The sun had just risen over the mountains and cast a light over the valley that made everything glisten. I had called in sick to work for the first time in three years. Earlier in the morning, I had met Mr. Charles and eaten bagels with him in the local bagel shop. I did not know why we were watching the house. He told me I would learn much from the experience. Every time I began to ask a question, he raised his index finger to his lips then pointed to the window.

A woman appeared as a soft shadow behind the glass. She sat down and looked out from the window. She raised a cup to her lips and held it there. I could not see her face but something about her movements, the way she slouched maybe, made me think of sadness and desperation. "Who is she?" I asked.

"She is a woman who beats her son. She sits in that window every morning and looks at the mountains and feels guilty for what she has done." Mr. Charles said. Even after the months of listening to him, his words never ceased to amaze and confuse me.

"How do you know?"

He looked at me with his green eyes, "I know." And I did not doubt him. "She beats her child every day. Her son is a small and nice boy. Her husband takes care of her and she lives in the midst of a beautiful landscape. She wants to die."

I was confused. "Why does she beat her son?"

"Because there is something inside that tells her to. She cannot fight the voice. She has no choice." He turned his eyes upon me again and softly laid his hand upon my arm. "Dolge, I've taught you about life. I want you to do something tonight. There will be a fog, and you will do as I say." The green of the mountains became the green of his eyes and I was lost in his voice.

The Event.

The fog came suddenly, as if on cue. It fell over the valley like a heap of tar-soaked feathers and the night was thick and cold. Dolge crept silently behind the house then huddled beneath a window. The truck parked in the driveway looked like a giant apparition. Dolge had noticed that the truck belonged to his foreman, Joe. He looked at the truck and thought of the many times he had seen his amiable foremen exit from its cab. The thought made him shiver. The truck looked like some beast; its appearance shifted from ghostly to demonic as the wind blew the fog in wisps through the night. The lock clicked and Dolge climbed through the window. The smell of the house confronted him like a guard dog. He smelled spices, candles, and the lingering scents of a ham dinner. He cringed as the hardwood floors creaked beneath his feet.

There was a Bible on the coffee table in the living room. He thought of Abraham and how he was prepared to kill his son. Dolge fingered the knife in his hand and imagined plunging it into the chest of an imaginary son on an altar atop a mountain. The son would scream. God demanded sacrifices. He did not always require them; he let Isaac go, but he demanded them often.

The bedroom was warm and smelled of the heavy smell of sleep. Dolge could make out two

forms lying in the bed. He walked to the smaller form and looked down. Her hair spread out in waves around her head. Her eyes fluttered. She was dreaming. The knife felt heavy and sharp in his hand. Dolge stood against the bed, shoulders hunched, and let the room swallow him like a warm throat. She wanted to die.

Factory Talk.

I grind these auto-parts and they feel heavier than usual. The sparks fly up towards my eyes but they bounce off my safety glasses. My hands hurt and I can barely keep my eyes open. The grinding noise is so loud.

She's dead. Joe didn't come to work this morning and word traveled pretty fast. People say she was poisoned. Joe woke up and breakfast wasn't made. He thought she was sick but then he noticed she wasn't breathing. A lot of folks say she did it herself.

I didn't do it. I should've done it. I wanted to; but when it came down to it I was too scared. I repeated his voice in my head but I still couldn't go through with it. I held the knife up but I couldn't bring it down.

I know he killed her. I don't know why. I don't know why I wanted to kill her. I wish I could take it back now. How did he know I hadn't done it? Where was he? Joe's not here. Why did Min-Soo die? I saw him walking with the newspaper on his head and I thought to myself, "Damn, that guy's lucky." He was fine. He was walking and yelling in Vietnamese. But he had a hole in his head. And two hours later he was dead.

The sparks fly from the grinder and disappear in the air like fleas doused in gasoline, jumping off a burning dog.

Dolge's Thoughts.

I wrote a letter to him earlier this evening. No one has seen him since the night of Joe's wife's death. Because of that, he's a suspect in the murder. But most people still think it was a suicide.

I went to her funeral. Her hair was swept out around her face like it was that night in her bed. She looked the same. Joe was crying and holding his son. I noticed bruises on the boy's hands. Joe hasn't been back to work.

I know I didn't kill her but it feels like I did. It seems like it was my idea from the beginning; like Mr. Charles was never really there. But I know he was with me because I still have his words in my head. I remember his words about evil and about death being beautiful. I remember how alive I felt when I was with him. I don't feel alive anymore. I feel like a shell filled with the empty echoes of his voice. I don't think they'll find him. I don't know if I'll find him. I feel like I need to go in to the mountains and build a wooden altar upon the rocks and pray, and fast, and sacrifice. But I don't have the faith. And my mind is slipping.

"a myriad collection of poets, visual artists, turntable instrumentalists, and emcees..."

Since 1995, Dr. Nikitah Imani, an assistant professor of sociology at JMU, has challenged JMU students by asking them to question society's traditional beliefs including its construction of race, class, and gender. Outside the classroom, he is also known as DP (Deadly Poet) Da Reapa, and is a member of the hip-hop group N.U.M.B. (New Urban Messianic Brotherhood). Dr. Imani and the two other core group members concentrate on educating people about what is "real and conscious" in life through music.

use music to discuss "reality with the goal of transforming it."

The members of N.U.M.B. believe that many of today's hip-hop groups equate success with a tough image that promotes drugs, violence, and misogynistic language. In reaction to this negative image, N.U.M.B. focuses on representing the hip-hop industry in a more positive way. The group believes that they can use sexuality in their music without objectifying women. They also discuss issues of violence and drugs as a way to make

The N.U.M.B.'s recently released album *Hard Times* also represents their desire to return hip-hop to its original form through songs such as "High Noon" and "Diss is War." "High Noon" is a song written by Dr. Imani about three people he knew growing up who, despite the potential they had and the goodness of their character, lost their lives because they could not escape their difficult situations. The point Dr. Imani makes in this song is that one day at "High Noon," divine judgement will come down upon society for not taking care of its

THE MISSION OF N.U.M.B.

By Chrissy Danbury

Dr. Imani describes the N.U.M.B. as "a myriad collection of poets, visual artists, turntable instrumentalists, and emcees with three central leaders." The two other core members of the group are Nedd Felton AKA Monsta, a former JMU basketball player and a current senior, and William Ferguson AKA DJ Pointdexta, who is also a senior at JMU. The N.U.M.B. developed out of Dr. Imani's social theory and hip-hop and social poetry seminars at JMU. He states that, "those courses focused on the use of hip-hop culture and lyrical poetry within social justice movements and examined relevant sociological questions." On their own time, interested students formed several groups in a project called the Consciousness Collective, which ultimately led to the formation of N.U.M.B.

According to Dr. Imani, the purpose of the Consciousness Collective, now N.U.M.B., is to "return hip-hop culture to the rap industry" and to

people aware of the problems that exist in our society, not to encourage the participation in either. By making people "conscious" of the realities in life, the N.U.M.B. hopes to elevate people above such things as violence and drugs.

The N.U.M.B. also disagrees with the rap industry's focus on projecting a certain type of appearance, associated with designer clothes and fancy cars. Dr. Imani and the other members of N.U.M.B. disagree with this image not only because they think of it as superficial, but also because they realize that it is impossible for many fans to achieve this image legitimately. Youths, for instance, often resort to stealing and selling drugs in order to find the money to buy the clothes that they associate with being cool or successful. The members of the N.U.M.B. do not want to encourage this type of activity and have returned to rap's "old school" ideas of accepting people as human beings regardless of the clothes they wear, their race, sex or religion.

people. According to Dr. Imani, more people have reacted to this song than to any other on the album because it is a reminder of events in their own lives. "Diss is War" is a collaboratively written battle cry to other hip-hop groups, inciting them to take rap back from the corporations who have devalued the true meaning of hip-hop and created something entirely false.

Dr. Imani came to this conclusion about corporate music through first hand experience. Before forming the N.U.M.B., Dr. Imani was a member of a rap group that had a contract with a major record label. After two months, he left the group because he realized that the purpose of the group was no longer about making music, but instead was about making money. In consequence of this disillusioning experience, Dr. Imani started the independent label ReapaALife Records, which produced the album *Hard Times*. The title *Hard Times* represents not only the struggles people go through in life, but the group's struggle to produce this

record on their own without the help of large corporate structure. Dr. Imani named the label ReapaALife because of his belief in taking advantage of all of the opportunities life has to offer. This idea also coincides with his stage persona DP Da Reapa. Although most people associate the reaper with death and evil, Dr. Imani feels that if a person has led a good and moral life, then they have no reason to fear the Reaper.

The N.U.M.B. is clearly a hip-hop activist group that is not afraid to separate itself from the mainstream in order to have an influence on people. Now, the group is also reaching out to the community through the release of solo albums. Dr. Imani AKA D.P. Da Reapa, plans to release his three C.D. solo album "The Three Phases of Def" in the next few months, while Nedd G AKA, The Monsta, is working on his solo album Goldie 4 Real. These solo albums will also emphasize the individual member's interest in creating songs that are real and relevant to our society. The members of N.U.M.B. also take responsibility, whether it be in solo albums or group albums, for their lyrics because they know that what they say has an effect on those who listen. They want their music to connect to the realities of people's lives in a way that allows them to rise above the obstacles they face, instead of supporting an image that will only contribute to a person's downfall.

"Hard Times represents not only the struggles people go through in life, but the group's struggle to produce this record on their own..."



Nikitah Imani is Da Reapa

Check out The N.U.M.B. at
www.rapstation.com

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Dey shot up da place 'cause dey didn't give a damn
'Bout endin' da life of anotha black man
Chasin' da beam-up 'n' jus' didn't know
Dey come knockin' U ain't seen no mo'
I guess I'll catch him 1 day soon
When we all fin' our place 'n da sun at high noon

**Lyrics from "High Noon," an original release by
The N.U.M.B.**

Poetry

Ki-Ki

by
**Sarita
Hartz**

She
can't
read
Curve of
lashes
long,
bead
of glassy shimmer
gathers
in her eyes
liquid brown
lucid
mahogany swirl,
plaintive
pleading
flickering forth
back
and
forth
page
eyes
page
eyes,
my eyes---
twin sister
moons,
velvety soft
color
like
hers
where she can
see
her reflection
where maybe
we
aren't so
different
anymore.

Chocolate skin
smooth
like peanut butter
her tongue
sticky
with syllables
sounded
slowly
slowly,
mouth moves
forms
foreign
tongue
synchronized
with the
shape
of my
lips,
silent language
of their
movement
fluid
entrancement
of
words,
she follows
the
secret
oscillation
my mouth
silently
charts
into new horizon-
power-prismed
scope
of knowledge
unknown
to
her
but
I
will
make
her realm
of
rainbow
promise.

I will
seep
silver-glittered
thread
through
silk
weaving
of her
mind.
I will
saturate
jasmine oil
scent
into
pores
of her
dreams.
But
we are
here.
Creamy roundness
of
her face
expectant,
fearful whispered
wondering
of
my heart
will I,
let
her
down,
like
shifty
stone face
of society
lowering
its gaze
ignoring the
possible
strength
of her legs,
the
resounding
step of her
stride,
measuring
her by the
smallness
of her

Not
the muscles
made
by each
barefoot
on the
pavement
gray
trudging
home,
windows
dark
and
empty--
like the
look
of her
prison
we
have made
when she
lifts
her head,
melts metal
indifference
with the
sapphire heat
of her
smile...
we
glance,
wince
slightly,
slightly,
but
somehow
turn
our heads
away--
the
deafening
roar
of
separation
when
we
say,
"she doesn't live on
my
street."



Swimmer Kristi Fletcher

Mechanical Animals

MECHANICAL ANIMALS

BY JOE ELLIS

We are mechanical
animals.
We are frozen ore.
We are liquid metal.
We are disassembled.
We are squeaky gears.
We are processed fears.
We are rust and tears.

I had to get up early on Friday to drive my Dad and Bev to L.A.X. I'd done some coke around 3AM and spent most of the morning lounging by the pool, caught some of Kyle's radio show. Bev was frantically trying to pack everything she owned. She'd been too drunk to do it the night before. They'd been planning a trip to Rome for three months, but had saved everything until the last minute. They always do. It gives them something to bitch about on the plane.

The flight was delayed and we went for an early lunch. I hadn't eaten anything in two days and expected a fierce hunger attack at any time, but I didn't want to eat with them watching me. I promised myself a meal later, somewhere with better service. I had coffee and listened to them chew.

I went back home, took a shower, did some coke, watched a talk show about a twelve-year-old slut from Iowa.

A few hours later, I met Allison in a bar uptown. She wouldn't stop barking about the guy she'd just met who worked for some independent studio in San Berdoo. She tried to convince me to come with her to the advance screening of a low-budget exploitation picture called "Candy Strippers." I had half a roast beef sandwich and told her I had an appointment to make. She smiled and I noticed, for the first time, how pale

she was getting.

Thirty people I didn't know showed up at my house that night. Actually, twenty nine people and Kyle, who tried to suck my dick in the bathroom. I almost let him do it, but he started crying about something and I was out of there. One of his friends asked me if I was gay. I told her no and we went downstairs.

I could hear the speakers blaring "Robocop" from my father's DVD setup, and muffled stoned voices, slow and stupid. The strange girl said she was 19 and stripped. I was suspicious, but she had a great body. She sucked me for a few minutes, trying to get me hard, and was starting to get pissed off when I suddenly recalled the slut from Iowa (and the gap between her teeth) and turned to steel. She mounted me, placed her hand behind my balls and pressed me all the way in.

I went outside for a swim and she didn't follow. Somebody was fucking in the change room where I keep my suit, so I just stripped down to my boxers. Turned the pool lights on and rolled a joint. In the house, someone started screaming. I finished smoking and jumped in, dunked my head below the water and listened; had a vision that, when I came to the surface, I would be in a field at night. When I came up, the stars were still obscured by city lights and somebody was still screaming.

I got to the kitchen before the ambulance came and tried not to panic like everybody else. Damien had been dancing on the table when he fell and smashed the shit out of his face on the stove. There was blood everywhere. We got him outside and I scrambled to get rid of everyone before the cops showed up.

Most of them rode away with Kit in his Ranger. Kit assured me that there was nothing to worry about

because he had soaked up most of the blood and put it in ice cube trays in the freezer. The paramedics came, took my name and told me someone would be by later to ask me a few questions, and took the poor jerk away.

I cleaned up as much as I could, and waited. And waited. Around 5, I decided to go to sleep instead of doing more coke. Kyle was in my bed, which was just as well because I suddenly wanted to sleep outside anyway.

When I woke up at 2:30 the next day, the first thing I saw was that somebody had puked in the pool. I didn't think it had been me. In a half day, I had tanned deep red on one side. I went in for a drink, poured a gin and tonic (Bev's drink) because it was the only thing around. Searched for an ice cube with only a little bit of red in it, plopped it in, paused, choked half of it down. And listened, for anything.

I figured Kyle had left by now. If not, I'd shower and beat the shit out of him. I read a few lines from a poem I'd written a few days before, started to call Allison and decided against it. I was still trying to figure out why I'd been so uncomfortable around her the last time we'd been together. She kept brushing up against me, trying to seem unintentional. I kept moving away.

"I've been wearing these clothes for days. I should change," I mumbled.

"You put those on this morning. I watched you."

"Yeah, but they're already dirty."

"Get undressed... I'll clean you up."

"It just doesn't make any sense."

"Doesn't have to."

"Yeah, maybe," I think... sucking on an ice cube. The

neighbor's Doberman starts barking and I think it's too goddamn hot to make much of a fuss over anything. Just keep barking, yeah um yeah man.

oh fuck, what's his name
what's his name?

"Hey, how've you been?"

He pulls me close and grabs my ass (trying not to be obvious) and suddenly I've got it. Antonio. He's the drummer for a punk band called Shitty Asphalt, except I'm not sure they still exist. He doesn't look half bad, but he's practically drooling on himself and that just annoys me.

"You look good, baby," he slurs and I think yeah and he keeps talking and I scan the room for Michael, who's a film producer, except I'm not sure that "film" is the right word. I'm supposed to meet him here and I tried to be late, but I didn't want to stay at the bar any longer so I'm here on time and I wish I didn't know anybody here because I don't feel like talking. I just want Michael to show up, so I can avoid everyone else. I just want the screening to be over, the night with Michael to be over, though I don't know why.

"Don't tell me you're in this movie," he says, and I can't tell if he's giving me shit or coming onto me or what and I really don't care. I wish he'd just go away. "You could be," he says as if it's the most flattering thing in the world.

"No, I'm meeting somebody," I say (thinking that I might have actually fucked this guy at some point, hoping I didn't) and quickly add, "I haven't seen you for a while."

"Yeah, not since that party at Chad's."

I blink. I have no idea who Chad is, but I'm pretty sure that isn't where I met this guy and I'm pretty sure he's so fucked up that he can't see straight.

"You look good. You look real good," he says.

"No," I say (backtracking), "I'm going to be a real actress, not a porn star. Michael might produce something for me someday, but it won't be anything like this." I wait for him to ask who Michael is. He doesn't, just says, "Well, you've got the body for it."

I suddenly feel nauseated and abandon him without even trying to be casual about it. He doesn't seem to care.

And I'm in the bathroom, trying to pull myself together but it's just like everything gets to me at once. I can go for days without worrying about anything and, all the sudden, I realize I haven't eaten anything all day and I've got a splitting headache from driving around without any sunglasses and it reminds me of the way my mother is always complaining about migraines even though she and everyone around her knows that she's an alcoholic. I'm the one who has to deal with it.

Michael has to show, he has to, but he probably won't even remember me. He probably invited every girl he saw last night. I probably looked desperate and he asked me here out of pity. God, what am I doing at a movie called "Candy Strippers"? This is a new low. I've got to get the fuck out of here.

I step out of the bathroom and spot him immediately and weigh my options.

I think I hear my name. I don't want to see him anymore, so I slip out the side door.

In the car, I think that's it what that's it? and start coming up with a much better story to tell Nathan as I head for his house.

Katie was on the freeway before she remembered to turn on her headlights. It was early, 5 AM, and she was headed for work, still thinking about the bearded man. She'd been at the corner of Ridgemont and High Street, dazed, when a knock on the window had nearly sent her through the roof. An old man, maybe 50, was locking eyes with her. In his right hand, he held up a copy of the Times. He spoke, but she couldn't hear him. No Doubt was on full blast; it helped her to wake up.

She started to roll down the window and then the light turned green. She looked at the date on the paper: Tuesday, June 1, 1999, and drove away.

Nothing went right that day. There were things she wanted to say, but she held back to keep her job. It

was better than lifeguarding. More money, not as dull.

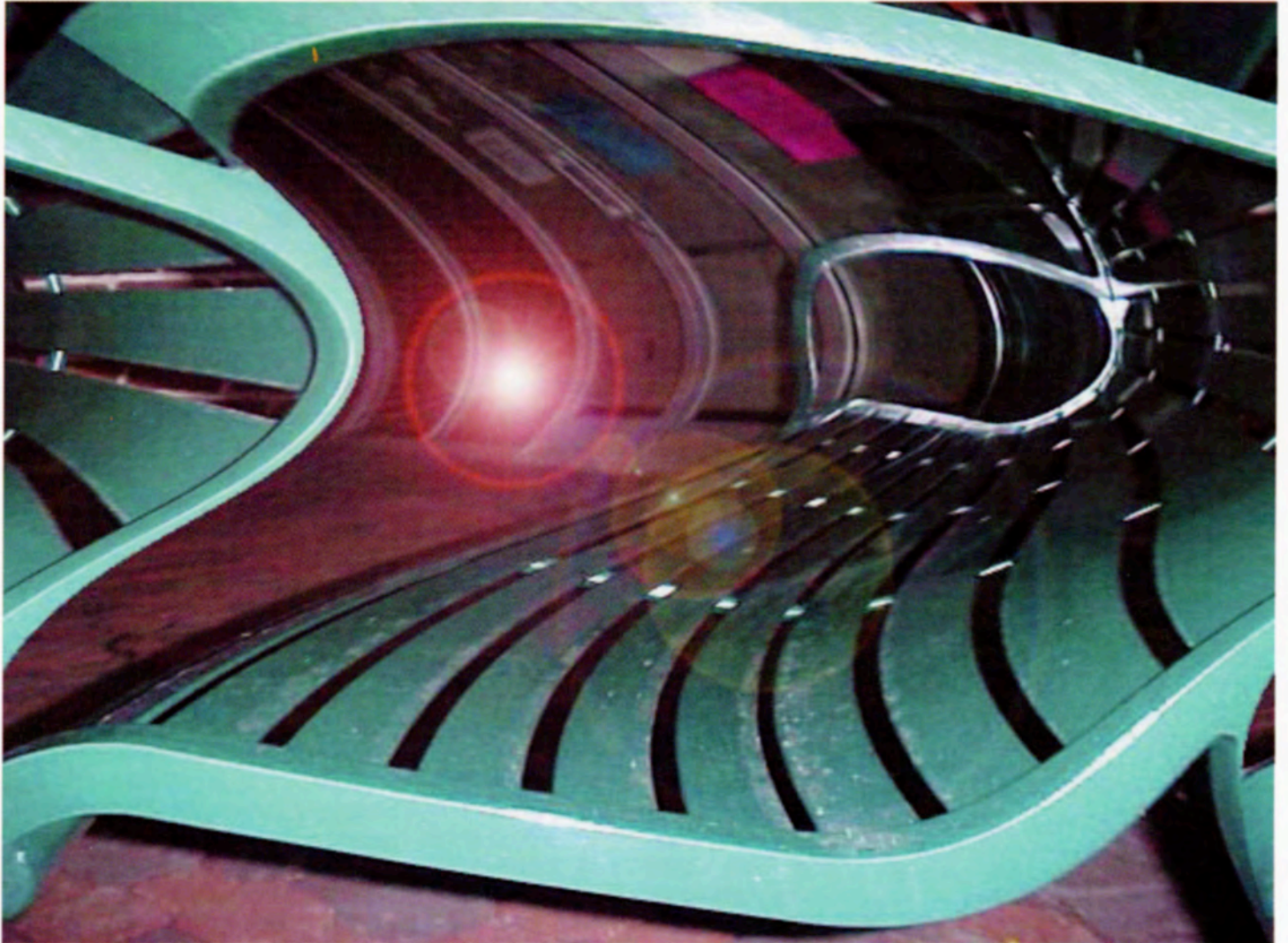
On the way home, there was another man at the light on Ridgemont. He had a huge wart on his chin, his face and arms were heavily tanned, he wore a shirt with blue lightning on it, he held up a piece of cardboard that said HOMELESS HUNGRY PLEASE HELP. She gave him a dollar and he asked if she had a light for his cigarette. She lied and drove away.

There was supposed to be a party tomorrow night at a friend of Allison's, a guy named Nathan who she'd met once. She used to know a Nathan. Allison's friend was cuter and probably smarter than the Nathan she'd known. She didn't think she was going to go, but she considered it for an hour before she went to sleep.

It had been too long since she met people. Any people. It wasn't that she hadn't tried. She'd moved in with a few strangers after her college plans fell through, and things went okay for a while. She'd had a few boyfriends. Except they weren't really boyfriends, that wasn't how she thought of them. They were charity cases. Most of the time, all they wanted out of life was a blowjob. That was something she could give them. It didn't cost her anything and it was always over pretty quick. It was one of the few things that made her feel good, not because she liked doing it but because it meant that at least one person went away happy. That was good enough for her.

She missed the guy who'd taught her how to suck dick. He was probably the nicest guy she'd ever dated and she'd only fucked him once, when they were both piss drunk.

She really did want to know people, but she didn't want to have to meet them. That was the only reason she still talked to Allison. She had to talk to somebody out of habit and she didn't have the initiative to find a new best friend. She'd forgotten how to make conversation with anyone else. She wanted to be interested in what strangers had to say and respond, but she just wasn't and she couldn't. She never knew,
(continued on page 37)



Untitled Xris Thomas

when someone was talking to her, what they expected, so she didn't say much of anything, just listened.

She didn't dream that night.

The next morning, the paper man was out again. She smiled at him, caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror, still smiling. She didn't feel right about it. She was cute when she smiled, just cute, but so what. If she'd had a dick, maybe she would have settled for a blowjob too.

All day, she went from house to house, thinking about the way different people lived. She didn't know how anyone could survive in the projects. It didn't even seem like life to her (she figured, because of the way she'd been brought up) and yet she wasn't much better off, financially. It wasn't the poverty that got her, she decided, it was the settling. Everyone there had settled for what they had. Take Mr. Jackson, customer #0028571-2. It didn't occur to him that he could get cable without stealing it from his neighbor; he didn't care that his cat had killed every other small animal in the neighborhood and was leaving the bones in the backyard, didn't care that his front door was falling off the hinges and two of his windows had been shot out, didn't care that his shorts were swinging in the breeze on the clothesline with huge brown stains on them. The neighbors didn't care either. They had their own lives to not care about.

On the way home, there was a new homeless guy on the corner - a black man with a Rams hat on. Katie thought, He doesn't look like he's starving to me.

It's not what you have, she decided, it's what you settle for. People who have nothing can still have more than most. In the end, you're going to come out ahead - as long as you plan to come out. Or something like that.

Allison called at about 9 and then again at 10:30, trying to convince her to come to Nathan's party. Katie took a bath, read a little bit, and closed her eyes.

She didn't fall asleep for hours, just laid there. She didn't need sleep to keep going. Didn't need people. She didn't need fuel; the

wheels just turned by themselves. It wasn't any kind of energy that kept her going, it was like gravity or something. Like that law - an object in motion tends to stay in motion. With the headlights on, it looked like the road was moving and she wasn't going anywhere at all.

"Where is this party?" Jon asks between drags.

"The Hills, man."

And, for the next hour and a half, we're caravanning around in eight cars, everybody getting high and drunk, music blaring out of bass-heavy speakers. I drive alone, at the back of the line, trying to keep up on the curves. If I get lost up here, I'm fucked. I don't know the Hills and I can just picture myself knocking on one of these mansion doors to ask for directions to the Valley. Chris would fucking love that. This party was probably his idea; for the longest time, I think we're not really going anywhere. Chris doesn't know what the fuck he's talking about. Everybody else gives him bullshit leads just to get rid of him and somehow we get stuck trailing the asshole in the middle of the night.

We turn one curve and there's a three story house in the trees, glowing against the darkness. That's got to be our baby. I turn down the music and all is silent. The Hills are dead but, as we get closer to the house, things get loud. There is a cluster of fumbling drunks out front, nobody I recognize. We park wherever we can (I, naturally, am closest to the road - I've been blocked in at one of these things before) and head toward the door, one big intimidating group of assholes, with James in the lead. James knows everyone.

In fact, everyone seems to have an acquaintance here and the group branches out immediately and the security is blown. I head for the refrigerator, snag a couple of beers and pocket them and start with a few shots of vodka. And a few more shots of vodka. I've got to convince myself that I can stand being here. And somehow I end up in the basement, with a bunch of militant-looking jerks, all too drunk not to say the first thing that comes into their heads.

Like that, I'm out of place... but I can't leave because I just sat down. I listen to every word they say, all of it hostile, but I don't retain anything. What does stay with me is the sight of the red couches and the pool table and the faint lighting and the pair of tits directly across from me. I have no intention of moving and then my presence is noted.

"I remember you," the Nazi says.

"Cool."

"I don't like you."

"I don't care," I say.

"What are you going to do about it?" he asks.

"What are you going to do about it?" I shoot back.

He smiles. "I could fucking kill you in a heartbeat," he assures me.

"Go ahead," I say, not flinching. I look away, not caring whether he takes me up on it or not.

He stretches his arms out and says, "Get up."

I say nothing. The music gets louder. And I think that will be it, but he calls in reinforcements and soon the Nazi and all of his friends are hovering around me, calling me a fag. I know that there's nothing for me to do at this point and I just sit there. Bullshit, I think. The music gets louder and the room blurs.

James walks in and somehow pushes them away from me without saying a thing. Somehow, he knows what's going on and he bails me out without acknowledging them at all.

"You got to come check something out," he tells me. Of course, I go. And take a few more shots and open up the second beer. We relocate to an upstairs room with a quartet of fairly attractive high school girls. One of them is shy; the other three are practically begging to be raped. The music gets quiet, hypnotic, and I can hear someone in the next room watching a movie on the DVD player. Through the window, I can see the city lights off in the distance and I step out through a side door and leave James to pick his latest victim and meet up with Chris and Tony, who are smoking a joint. Chris reluctantly hands it to me and

Mechanical Animals

quickly takes it back after a few drags. The guy's an asshole. Having taken him for all he's worth, I return to the room where James has narrowed the selection down to two. James is always looking out for me and he introduces me as his boy, which gets me in immediately with the short one, whose name is Nina. and we head outside. There's a swimming pool and, she says, a change room.

"Whose house is this?" I ask.

"I'm happy. God, I'm so fucking happy," she says.

"What's your name again?" I ask.

"Have you ever felt like your whole life falls into place in one moment?" she asks, "Like, just when you think everything is completely fucked up, you realize that it doesn't matter and the important stuff is completely okay even though you couldn't see it until now?"

"I know exactly what you mean," I say, and tear off her shirt.

Coming out, an hour later, I realize that the music is loud again and I head for the basement. And the room starts to spin... but, in a perfect way.

The music gets louder, the stairs get steeper on the way down.

I'm suddenly thinking of the last time I picked a fight, under a railway underpass up north when I went to visit my cousin last summer. I spent the night in jail, thinking, how do these things always happen to me?

There's nobody downstairs except a loner, stoned and staring. I think it might be his house. His foot is tapping to the music but that's the only sign that he's alive.

"You're a bad, bad man," I tell him and leave before any attempt is made to engage in conversation. I've decided that I don't want to pick a fight half as much as I thought I did. I want to go home and make a phone call. Or go upstairs and make a phone call. A long-distance phone call. Who's going to know it was me? Who even

knows who I am? I'm a ghost at this party.

I find a phone in one of the smaller bedrooms.

The music is slower. This time I recognize it: R.E.M.'s "Leave."

"Hello?" a groggy voice says.

"Lisa. Were you sleeping?"

"Yeah," she says, "but it's okay. Where are you?"

"I don't have any idea," I say, smiling. "I'm at some party in The Hills. I was thinking about you."

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah, I just felt like calling.

The Music gets louder, the stairs get steeper on the way down.

I'm suddenly thinking of the last time I picked a fight, under a railway underpass up north when I went to visit my cousin last summer.

I spent the night in jail, thinking, how do these things always happen to me?

What did you do tonight?"

"Not much," she says, her voice slow (God, I wish she'd hurry up and say something!), "Just went out with Wendy and David."

"You should have come with us," I say, knowing that it would have been extremely awkward if she had, thinking that I should have been fucking her in the change room instead of the short girl. In fact, I tell myself, I was fucking Lisa in the change room. The short girl wasn't really there at all.

"I've been thinking, Lisa," I say and - stop. What am I going to say? Before I can answer myself, before she can answer, I add: "I don't have any idea who lives in this house. Chris brought us here. I'm tired of it. I'm tired of these people. All of

them - even James. I'm tired."

It sounds like a plea and I don't want to be pleading. I have to speak again - quickly - before she can respond. "I've got to go, I can't talk, I'm restless. I just wanted you to know that I was thinking about you."

"Okay," she says, and her tone pisses me off. What does she want? I called her. Isn't it enough that I thought to call her in the middle of the night? Nevermind the fact that I'm always calling her when I've been drinking. Shut up.

"I love you," I say, and the words sicken me as soon as they're out of my mouth and I hang up before she can respond. God what a bitch, I think and grope for the door in the darkness. I hit the switch, partly by accident, and am blinded by life-sucking fluorescent light. I flick the switch back off and watch the stars dance in front of my head and step out of the room, into the hall, where the music is - nonexistent.

Something's going on downstairs. I push into the living room. If I were by myself, none of these thoughts would be fun. It's the company - all these stupid, boring voices and flat, expressionless faces. They have something to offer, something simple, something necessary. I've got to get to the heart of this pulsing madness.

An arm hits me and spins me around. "We're going," Chris says, and I start to respond with Fuck you, but I see the blood on his hands (and now on my shirt) and follow him instead.

"What the fuck?" is all I can manage to get out as we all move toward our cars.

"We've got to get out of here," Chris says, and I think that it's a minor miracle that I wasn't in the basement because he probably would have left me there if I hadn't been near the front door.

"Where's James?" I say.

"Fuck James," Chris hisses.

"We've got to go. Get in your car; I'm riding with you."

I think that it would be appro-

prate if James finally got busted because he gets away with everything and I don't. We've got to go, I convince myself, and fumble with the keys to my Talon.

The ride back is slow and labored, but I won't remember it tomorrow.

This is the down slide. All we've got left to do now is sleep.

Just close our eyes.

Forget everything.

It's just darkness. It's just night games. Radio blaring The Doors. Music LOUDER. louder.

"You want to go get some breakfast," Chris asks.

"Sure, what the fuck," I say, without thinking about it at all.

The sky shudders, lighting, rippling across the valley in hurried flashes, darkness, breathing, coming alive. The rain begins to fall, lightly, patting the tops of cars, tickling my arms in the window sill. The night is dancing, and booming somewhere in the distance, and creeping. Heavier and lighter, rocking gently like a mother with child, crying out desperately like a motherless child. The trees swaying, flurries of shadow, rattling their roots like chains, waving.

The next day, the humidity is thick like butter against my skin when I wake up, weighed down, heavy-set, oppressed, already tired, and Van Morrison is on the radio singing: She's an angel. The walls and the ceiling are once-white, empty. I sit up in my sleeping bag, looking at the sea of soup cans and beer cans and paper around me. There are beans smeared in my lap from sometime in the night. They're growing hair. It's noon, according to my watch, time to get up and read the paper and do something with my life.

One of the neighbors is in the bathroom making strange sounds and I have to piss, so I throw on some pants and head on down to the pancake place. The owner eyes me suspiciously as I make a bee-line to the toilet and unload. The mirror is smeared with shit, I manage to flatten most of my hair to my skull and go out and get a pack of cigarettes and a Post and a booth and order.

Page One: We've accidentally

bombed the Chinese embassy in Kosovo and there's a picture of students waving signs that say things like: Down with the USA! Suddenly, the paper is yanked out of my hands by a guy with too much body hair. Which is fine, because I didn't really want to read about all the bullshit that's going on in the world. I'll never get to see it, who cares if it's there or not? He takes my coffee too and I just watch him, without reaction. He's holding back his stupid hairy grin.

Still holding when some guy, wearing a football helmet, approaches me and starts talking about the ozone layer. He's obviously panicked and I try to calm him down with a look of general disinterest and a lack of sudden movement. His arms are pale and crusty; I realize he's wearing thick layers of sunscreen. Poor fool. I know that it's the fear of UV radiation that gets him through the day.

Hairy man takes my plate of eggs as soon as they arrive. I let him. I know it's the anger at shorter men that gets him through the day. He eats the toast, spits in the eggs and returns the plate to me, smiling this time. He's got a tattoo of a rat with a machine gun on his arm. I look into his fat, grizzled face, nod. It throws him off track and he sits down to regroup.

The Helmet stops repeating himself and walks over and sits in the counter. A large woman comes in with her poodle and the owner says: No dogs out, and she just comes in anyway, spitting out obscenities under her breath, chanting beautifully. At the counter, she speaks up: NO DOGS NO DOGS BACON BACON. The owner retrieves a black piece of bacon and hands it to her and she begins to waddle toward the door.

CREEPING JESUS, say I, and the hairy man shoots me a look. What you?, his face asks. I eat my eggs, spit and all, and then proceed to chew up half of a napkin as I wipe my mouth like a clumsy child. His expression changes. He thinks that it's the creeping Jesus that gets me through the day, and he might be right.

He gets up, quickly, without a word and walks out. I follow him,

leaving change scattered on the table. It's been the same sort of nonsense every day since I dropped out of school and started wandering.

hahaha staccato laughter but what was the joke?

"So how's Kit doing?" Jim asks.

"He's doing good. You knew he'd transferred to Connecticut College, right? He loves it there." The subject changes quickly. Jim's oldest is in Columbia. Not the university, but the country. Tom hasn't heard from his son, Kit, in over a month. He doesn't really know how he's doing and, in truth, this is the first time he's thought about it in as long.

It's the end of summer. Tom's younger son, Elton, starts high school tomorrow. He's playing badminton with the neighbor kids. The neighbor kids might as well be one-legged for all their coordination. Tom goes to the kitchen for another beer and, when he comes back outside, the sky looks darker. There's still a hint of day right just above the mountains. He misses the horizon. He misses the ocean. But Lana is doing so much better.

She loves it here. She loves it in this little Stepford community, where everybody knows everything and everybody pretends to care. Even Tom has found himself ignoring things that used to put him on edge. I'll live longer, he tells himself, than I would have if we'd stayed in California. He supposes that's a good thing.

Leon Russell is on Leno tonight. Tom thinks he might have met Leon Russell at one time or another. He does not think that Leon is a very genuine person. He turns off the TV and Lana says, "Hey." As if she was watching it. She's got some Good News book in her hand. She's finding God, which makes him fuck her harder.

She falls asleep right away, always does. He thinks back to the first time they came through town. It was July 4th and the streets were empty. The houses all looked like rot. Off to the right, after the school (at sight of which Elton let out an appropriate sigh of disgust), they saw a fat man dressed in a clown suit. Nobody said anything.

Mechanical Animals

As they reached the oldest part of town, they realized they were just in time for the annual Independence Day parade. The townfolk flushed them on either side, grinning. Tom remembers feeling ill. Lana said, "Let's move." He hadn't caught her meaning right away. Maybe, he now thinks, the town was the first thing she'd seen that was more disturbed than herself.

Tom finally falls asleep and dreams the rest of that parade, which ends down by the old mill, where they had fireworks at night. When he goes home, the furniture is completely rearranged and his family is gone. He searches frantically until he finds the sweaty old man clown under the sheets in his bed. He asks: "Do I know you?"

There is more and then Tom wakes up to the ticking of the clock on the night table. It reads 2:17. He glances at Lana, sleeping beside him, and slips out of bed. He can see blue light under the door of Elton's bedroom. He's playing video games or chatting online. Tom starts to knock on the door and tell him to go to sleep, but quickly decides against it and heads downstairs for a glass of water. He has cottonmouth from drinking too much at the cookout earlier. He finds what he needs in the dark and sits down.

It's this feeling; it was different when he lived in the city. It was indifference when he was there. Now, it's like fear. It's like the smell of wet newspapers.

He remembers his mother, the way she used to can vegetables in the middle of the summer. He remembers his father, that underlying smell of cigars.

It's something old. Like going home to die.

Some sound, flat, hollow, breaking the silence, his keys hit the top of an empty keg and the one-room apartment was bathed in dim light and imagined sucking sounds. Her first thought: a heavy-set awareness of four walls. She realized that probably every room she'd ever been in had had four walls, but she'd never thought of it. She'd never felt so boxed in. God, that's stupid, she told

herself and looked at her host for some sort of acknowledgment. Two opposing walls were lined with silver kegs. In between was the couch that time forgot, facing a vacant 16-inch television in the middle of a stacked entertainment center. She had to piss.

"Where's your bathroom?" she asked. He pointed, she went. She couldn't bring herself to sit on the toilet, so she stood in front of the mirror, checking her skin, opening and closing her eyes, adjusting her bra. What the hell are you doing here?, she asked her reflection. They were both dazed.

And startled by a sudden knock on the door. "What do you drink?" the stranger asked.

She heard: What do you think?

"About what?" she asked, not wanting him to answer. Maybe he'd disappear, she thought. She suddenly wanted to spend the night, possibly even the rest of her life, alone.

"What do you want to DRINK?" he said, louder, slurring.

"What have you got?" she asked.

"Everything," he said. She smiled, and then frowned too-suddenly.

"Surprise me," she said, belatedly, knowing he would.

She started to open the cabinet, thought better of it, flushed the toilet, whispered Think Sexy and opened the door.

"I've got an idea," she said, peeling off her shirt, "Ever been tied up?"

He emerged from the darkness of the kitchen, handed her a thick red drink.

"I'm really more of a hands-on guy," he said, calmly, watching her tiny right breast and hard nipple distort as she lifted her glass to her lips. She took a small sip, made a screwball face to indicate that she didn't like it, and looked for a place to set down the glass.

There was a delicate silence. He tried to remember the last time he'd had Asian pussy. She tried to think of a way out.

"What's with the kegs?" she

asked.

He thought for a minute.

"That's where I keep the bodies."

She paused, staring at her shirt on the floor. Looked up to meet him - chiseled body, hard face, fiery hair, shifty eyes. He tried to force a smile. "Joke," he said, "Sorry."

She glanced at the row of kegs next to her.

"You can check," he said, embarrassed, and made a line to the stereo, picked an album: The Zombies. The music put her at ease for the first time. He wondered if he should hide the CD case, so she wouldn't spot the name of the band. Maybe she even knew The Zombies?, but he doubted it. Did slopes know oldies? He pulled the fold-up bed out of the couch and sat down awkwardly on wrinkled sheets.

"I'm sorry," he said, blushing, "Really."

She was even starting to like him. Instead of continuing to undress, she sat down next to him, touched his arm lightly with hers.

She was gone the next morning when he got the results of his drug screening. His arm shot out for the phone, knocked it off the table. He recovered it, mumbled Speak, realized his elbow was bleeding. When he saw a blood stain on the sheets, he knew that it was old blood.

"What do you want?" he asked the caller, interrupting them halfway through whatever news they had for him.

"Are you there?" the thin-voiced man asked.

"What do you want?" he asked again.

"... concerning the results of your drug screening..."

"Yeah?"

"... need another urine sample..."

"How's that?"

"... some difficulty analyzing the last one. There was some kind of..."

"What do you mean a mix-up?"

"... a foreign element..."

The stranger was suddenly curious. It seemed to him that just about anything could have come out of

his body. Nothing was really 'foreign.'

"What did you find?"

"... must have accidentally..."

"What did you find?"

"... identified minute traces of some rather exotic poly-metal alloys. How they got in there, we have no idea..."

"Thank you," the stranger said and hung up, thinking I guess that means I don't get the job.

He glanced over at the whore, sprawled in the doorway, her eyes glazed and stupid.

"Who needs it?" he asked, and found himself waiting too long for an answer.

"Oh my god, you were in that movie," the hyper girl says and Will can't figure out if she's asking him or telling him. He shrugs. "Which one?"

"You were that crazy guy," she says, "You were soooo good."

"Thanks," he says.

"How do you play a crazy person?" she asks. He meets her, eye to eye. She's excited, he can tell. He remembers where he is; people around here aren't used to seeing movie stars at the local diner.

"Just like anybody else... only crazier," he says, with a picture-perfect grin. She starts laughing as if it's the wittiest thing anyone has ever said to her. They always do and he sometimes wonders.

"No, really, I mean you were so creepy. You're not really like that, are you?"

"I'm not really like that," he assures her and levels his hand, "Would you like to sit down?" Normally, he wouldn't be so cordial but he's fascinated by something about her. That look in her eyes - you don't see that often, he thinks to himself. It's a little too genuine, like she's the crazy one here. He's used to being associated with the mechanical animal he played in "Slipstream." In fact, a lot of people who recognized him would avoid him completely because the film gave them nightmares.

"So what are you doing in a place like this?" she asks.

"Are you feeding me a line?" he asks. She looks confused, didn't

get the joke, he realizes.

"I mean the town," she clarifies.

"I just moved here," he said.

"No way!" she shoots back.

He doesn't know how to respond to this, just smiles.

"Why?" she asks, sounding personally offended.

"There was a teaching position open. Friend of mine told me about it."

"You're going to be a teacher?"

"I'm going to try," he says and lights a cigarette.

"You smoke?" she asks. He looks down at the cherry, inhales, says "No."

"Hey, so what happened to that guy?" she asks.

"What guy?"

"You know... the crazy guy you played in that movie. I couldn't sit through the whole thing. It totally freaked me out."

"I got shot," he said, surprised that he had said "I," then added, "Repeatedly."

"Good," she said, and again he didn't know how to respond.

She ordered a hamburger and fries and a Coke - all things his ex-girlfriend wouldn't have fed to her arch rival. And right away he liked her. Two months ago, he would have poured on the charm, taken her back to his place and scared the shit out of her. When he was making a movie, he was in character twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. That was why his girlfriend had left. That was why he hadn't talked to his parents in four years. They just couldn't understand what it took to be an artist. You couldn't just play a mechanical animal, you had to really be one, stainless steel teeth and all. He could always tell when people were acting and he never wanted to be just acting.

He wasn't in movies anymore, at least not for a while. Things had gotten a little too crazy on the last one. He was lucky enough to have friends who gave him a way out, gave him some time to figure out what he was going to be now. Somebody was going to pay him to teach, so he was going to teach. But that was pretty

vague stuff. There were a hundred different kinds of teachers. It was a faceless character so far, one that hadn't been fleshed out yet. One that he would have to build from the ground up.

He was writing his own material now. He could say anything at any moment.

"So, like, you wanna go somewhere?" the girl asked.

"Like where?" he asked, coyly.

"Like to a party?" she said, obviously unsure of herself. Her lack of confidence was refreshing. Her willingness to try was inspiring.

"I didn't think teachers were supposed to party with the students."

"You're going to be a different kind of teacher," she said, "I can tell."

"You're right," he told her, and mashed his cigarette into the ash tray.

"What's your name?" he asked, separating a few one dollar bills to leave for tip.

"Leah," she said.

"Leah... that's a pretty name."

He was starting to feel awkward, but that was normal he supposed.

"Yeah." She was all smiles, too real to not be beautiful.

He paid the cashier and followed the short blond-haired girl out of the restaurant with the words: Lead the way.

Poetry

Untitled

by Kelly Bartnik

A woman whose eyes willingly reveal
glimpses of her soul
slowly pours every molecule of her being
into all the empty spaces
that penetrate the shell which
encompasses me.

Is it quite possible that I may
feel whole again?

Is it quite possible this
wholeness is her doing?

The once unattainable possibilities
are now endless.

My peripheral vision has achieved
a familiar clarity; one that seemed
to have momentarily disappeared.

Awareness tingles in the tips
of my limbs

Inspiration arises from every
action. . .

because of her enlightened presence.

I long to bow at her feet
and praise her existence
as I bask in the cool warmth
of her shadow.

I envision her mesmerizing gaze
as it falls upon me from above-
the sunlight outlining her figure
as though it were meant for
her alone.

Painted Goddess

she & he

see the man

painting

her slender skin red

with tendrils of

blue running

through

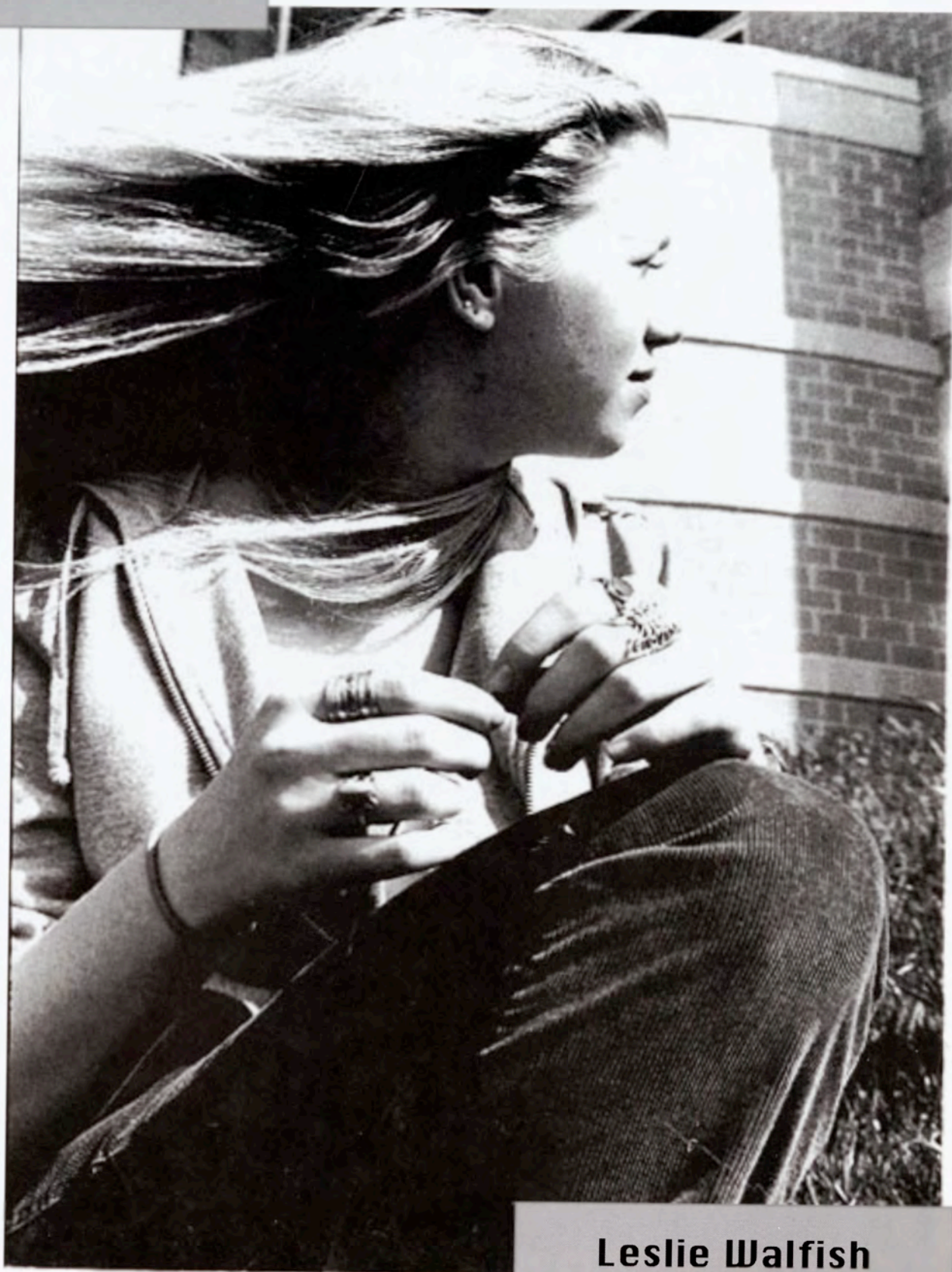
Jessica Wright

Headstrong

by Rachelle Lacroix



Untitled



Leslie Walfish

Photography



Untitled **Leslie Walfish**

Bewildered Eye



Ambre Bosko

backtrack

i crouch in my dorm room
thinking that solitary confinement
has its upsides, sometimes.
i rebel silently against my social nametag,
my thrift-store boots
three sizes too big.
i'll depart with
San Fransisco flowers in my hair
and a big piece of American pie
tucked into my carry-on.
i'm ready for my close-up, Mrs. Gill.
take a magnifying glass to my soul,
just don't expect to see much.
i'm half-empty right now,
i'm afraid.
so sorry,
but cynicism has a way
of infiltrating the system
when bosom buddies take a knife to your back.
one in particular,
my moody, number 13 counterpart.
are you aware that you have become my Judas?
(check yes,
check no).
i throw myself on the mercy of the fort,
and frankly, my dear,
i give more of a damn than you think,
because i will finally be free
and scared shitless
in a land familiar to only my crossed fingers
and squeezed eyelids.
alone with my anorexic heart,
starving to blackness.
a whore of a different color
and a semester of soul-rehab,
caught in the cross-fire
between my will and my better judgment.

by becca worthington



(a blues song)

by aaron ford

claudio is a midget who rides around on his tricycle screaming at the stars.
some people mistake him for a cricket,
others take him for a flower,
but everybody agrees that he makes great popcorn.

he's in love with a cantonese dominatrix who ties him to a wall
and thrashes him with a whip until he calls her "mommy."
her name is lucy.

he has a dog named cat and a cat named dog,
and sometimes when he calls for cat to come in from he yard
the cat comes comes in and gets everything confused,
but he doesn't mind
because sometimes it's the other way around.

his tricycle has a big wheel in the front and a bell on the handle.
he likes to ride it to the grocery store on tuesdays so he can buy deodorant.
when it's pretty outside he takes it to the park so he can run over squirrels
everybody stops and stares,
but he don't care.
he's a bear-- GRRR.

he lives in a house in the middle of he street.
sometimes his parents come over and say
"claudio, just who do you think you are? roman polanski?"
and to this claudio responds
"you know, i'd kill you if i had blocks on my feet."
and sometimes you think he just might wanna blow up the world.

he works at the post office every thursday from eight till nine in the morning.
they pay him six dollars and seventeen cents for being a security guard,
and when he gets done there
he goes home and draws pictures of frogs mating in south dakota
on south dakota
around south dakota
for south dakota
forever--south dakota.

his friends in college called him diego
and he never could figure out why.

Arts Week Celebrations

April 8-15

Arts Week is a week dedicated by the students to celebrating the Arts and JMU's artistic community.

EVENTS FOR 2001

Performances by:

~Breakdancing Club
~New & Improv'd
~Swing Dancing Club
...followed by
Swing lessons
~local & JMU bands

~ Foreign Film Festival

~Student-Faculty discussion panel on Censorship and the Media/Arts/Music

~gardy loo! & Sister Speak Poetry Reading

~Children's book reading

~Marathon Book Reading of D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterly's Lover* held on the Kissing Rock

~Sister Speak, gardy loo!, & the Interdisciplinary Creative Writing minor presents an evening with poet Sarah Jones

~And many more events to come...

Want to help out with Arts Week?

Arts Week is always in need of people and organizations to help with preparing the week-long celebration. Our goal is to celebrate the Arts in every creative medium and to honor Artists from every culture, gender, and race.

For Questions or Information contact Marisa Domenech at artsweek@yahoo.com

submit to gardy loo

send
art, photography, fiction,
personal essays, poetry
to gardy loo,
MSC 1801

or
gardynews@yahoo.com

tentative deadline
for spring 2001 issue
february 23

we'll be waiting

