

Otterbein University

Digital Commons @ Otterbein

Quiz and Quill

Otterbein Journals & Magazines

Spring 1995

1995 Spring Quiz and Quill Magazine

Otterbein English Department

Otterbein University, englishdept@otterbein.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.otterbein.edu/quizquill>



Part of the [Fiction Commons](#), [Nonfiction Commons](#), and the [Poetry Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Otterbein English Department, "1995 Spring Quiz and Quill Magazine" (1995). *Quiz and Quill*. 66.
<https://digitalcommons.otterbein.edu/quizquill/66>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Otterbein Journals & Magazines at Digital Commons @ Otterbein. It has been accepted for inclusion in Quiz and Quill by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Otterbein. For more information, please contact digitalcommons07@otterbein.edu.



Quiz and Quill

Spring 1995

Strength. There is no better word to describe what this year's Q & Q represents. First of all, strength is what it took from faculty advisor, Wayne Rittenhouse, to organize and form a brand new group of "Quiz and Quillers" into a staff. —Which wasn't all that difficult, considering the determination and enthusiasm we all jumped in with. Many thanks to a terrific staff!

Secondly, much strength and great talent was reflected in ALL of the great submissions we received. We had twice as many entries as last year, showing a revival in writing excellence here at Otterbein. The decisions made in choosing this year's pieces were not easy; so many creative writers, so few pages of *Quiz and Quill*.

It took strength from the hard-working staff to stick together through advisor changes, as Dr. Rittenhouse took a much-deserved sabbatical spring quarter. Many thanks to Jim Gorman for his efforts to involve our group with this year's Writer's Fest, as well as for helping us see this issue through.

Special thanks goes out to Kris Cooper and Kip Tobin, our co-production editors. These two put in many hours of outside time with PageMaker, in agony and in triumph, to insure you with this best-ever edition. You two are our heroes!

Keep up the great writing, Otterbein, and keep the tradition of "the Quill" alive and kickin' in years to come. The power is in the pen!

This edition of *Quiz and Quill* is dedicated to Dr. Wayne Rittenhouse, whose belief in each student as a writer helped this graduating editor make it out alive and well.

Editors

Heather Spessard, editor-in-chief
Kip Tobin and Kris Cooper, co-production editors
Dr. Wayne Rittenhouse, advisor

Staff

Holly Baker
Carrie Buhler
Adam Ellis
Alyce Frankenhoff

Jason Green
Peter Hite
Beth Honeycutt
Karin Wralely

Table of Contents

Bedfellow	Cheri Howman	4
Riding the Chicago L Train	Adam Ellis	5
Me and My Automobile	Peter Hite	8
Me, My Job and My Manager's Anus	Kip Tobin	10
Clove Cigarettes	Karin Wraley	16
Loving the Barmaid	Adam Ellis	17
The Lottery	Katrina Seymour	18
I Watch My Mother	Karin Wraley	23
Birth of MSG	Heather Spessard	24
Bad Habits	Chuck Salmons	25
Ripley's Belief	Jason Green	26
beautifonic sucksand	Kip Tobin	27
8 o clock on vine and marriage	Alyce Frankenhoff	28
Painting in B Major	Melissa Gotsch	29
Prisoner Of War	Karin Wraley	30
Addicted Utopia	Jason Green	31
Observations from Suburbia	Aaron Carter	33
A Fable	Kevin Brown	35

Table of Contents, continued

Somewhere in a Senior Citizens Home	Chuck Salmons	36
Courtroom chalks: 1961 Justice in Mississippi	Adam Ellis	37
On the Rocks	Carolyn Gregg	39
Dharma Chatter During a Rainstorm	Adam Ellis	40
The Lying Nun	Carolyn Gregg	42
Interstate 480	Melissa Gotsch	50
Sunday Afternoon Drives Section 47	Adam Ellis	51
LeMay	Peter Hite	52
Because	Karin Wraley	53
7 a.m. Easter Sunday	Kip Tobin	54
Surreally	Kip Tobin	55
Sweet Bruises	Carolyn Gregg	56
release	Lisa Davis	57
neverland	Lisa Davis	58
Creating Literature	Adam Ellis	59
Contributors		66
Quiz and Quill contest winners		68

Bedfellow

In the still of sleepless summer nights
I sometimes hear the warning call
of a distant train pushing its way
through the heavy air to reach my wary ear.
In the darkness I go back to the stuffy cabin
and imagine the ceiling two feet from my nose
as I lie in the top bunk of the peeling metal-framed bed.

The sound was much closer then, but the air
just as stale, as the trembling of the train
rattled the tiny cabin nightly. In the backwater
beyond the gravel road, where many a frisbee
met its foamy green fate, the chorus of crickets
and tree toads took no notice. I seemed to be alone
in this mystical moonlit world, my eyes wide open
evading sleep, while I listened to the others snore,
audibly oblivious to the inner peace that had
quietly climbed in bed with me.

Cheri Howman

Riding the Chicago L train with my lover five times in three days

Standing amidst shuffled feet on the concrete platform
that echoes footsteps, an amphitheater, with performers
on each street corner,
my lover stares openly like Greta Garbo
at the gray sky, the crowded street corner,
then twists her face to me. The smile I own now.
The train whistles to a stop, and shuffled
feeted actors with city lives
bow their way aboard.

Walled transit Graffiti: A mazed sign of color routes running the
slave classes to the suburbs and the saviors to the cities.

Within the train a brown bear man
paws the microphone and growls out incessant commands
beneath a burly voice,
“No smoking, eating, or drinking on the L and please, don’t lean on
the doors, for your personal safety.”
He rummages down the aisle collecting
transfer slips and money
swinging them beneath his gut, in a hip purse,
like a kangaroo putting away a cub.
he waltzes past me seeing only my ticket time
and destination.

Graffiti on my vinyl seat: The Nation of The Red Islam is upon you.

Sweet faced fat, women enter
swinging their FAO Schwartz bags
stuffed with animals that cost too much to cuddle
and Barbies tall enough to tango with.
They sway their childborn
butts into cushioned seats and
eye my hand locked on the mistress to my left.
They roll their eyes shuddering off
my affection to youth and a tight body.
They enter gold necklaced and crocodile shoed
and exit the train, package buried.

Graffiti on the station walls: Those that Got Never Give.

My lady dozes.

An old woman sits oranged and wrinkled,
 a marigold, her frayed coat sucks the cushion for moisture.
 Her eyes speak a widow's tale,
 one husband black suited six feet under with her locket.
 She sits eyeing, wondering
 if the Snow White on my shoulder
 wants to try one of her apples.
 Her unbeaded eyes glaze
 made gray by the Chicago skyline
 searching for a cold morning heart attack.

Graffiti on the train door: Please surrender seats to seniors.

Black leather backed men
 with flipped silver chains clink her awake.
 They all slime their eyeballs over her
 like cowboys eyeing steer. Her eyes
 tickle their interest and she gives me my smile.
 They all hoodwink at each other
 and pass. Swinging their business to women
 with broken glass dreams and nightmare break ins.

Graffiti on pamphlets: Volunteers of America need your support.

The hair shellacked business man
 boards, his suede shoes and briefcase slide through
 people. His early morning sunglasses pause
 on her college letters.
 He turns his head wondering about how ivy league
 women find small town college men
 with dim futures and small stamped money.
 She thinks I might be famous one day,
 the businessman and I jitter knowing
 she will rise while we fall.

Graffiti on slum building: Corporate America is back.

She nods out our stop
 and I rise luggaged with a green suitcase
 and military backpack, dragged through someone else's Vietnam.
 We get off as part of the herd,
 and she steers me into the airport terminal.

We kiss and she gives me the last dose of her smile
 for this session. I strangle onto more mass transit
 as she returns alone, straightfaced,
 dozing, to lose the gray morning and the same five people,
 staring.

My airport stall Graffiti: The L is just mass transit,
 a grand mover.

Adam Ellis

Me and My Automobile

I'm seen by passing farm houses
 sleek streaking red
 down their country roads.
 In other's rear mirror I'm seen charging,
 passing on left
 leaving them behind
 way behind
 forgotten highways are usually not patrolled.
 Free is me. Free is me. Free is me.
 Car windows rolled down
 wind whippin'
 circlin' roun' blowing me hair back
 way back
 bringing in autumn's scent
 that is sensory to college women,
 freshmen, hair blonde or black
 in new fall clothes and pretty smiles,
 gives one sense of newness, excitement.
 Autumn beautifully slapping my face.
 It's real air out here.
 Colors shaping trees
 swift by orange, red, brown
 on top a plane of green
 against and below the almighty blue
 that holds wisps o' gentle white patches
 against its translucent surface.
 My transportation, a red dot traveling up the stretch
 of black that separates two greens.
 Me only a blur inside that red.
 Still me controlling.
 Small farms and grand fields slowly
 replaced by industrial buildings.
 Outerbelt in five miles.
 Music pumps my stereo system
 thankfully hooked to a disc man.
 Music, liberating, choreographs surroundings.
 Drums beat past in a primitive rhythmic pattern.
 Bass pulsing, adding life.
 I want to be an improvisational guitar riff
 grooving in, through, around
 all rhythms, beats, pulses.
 Veering off and accelerating down the
 exit ramp into the past traffic
 Making my way through with

grace and good timing.
Everybody's home is a passing
exit ramp to almost everybody else.
Men are not smiling
in expensive cars.
Pregnant woman passes, seat back,
smoking.
I want to be happy
remember
what's important.
We're being mowed over
with the green
by the long stretch of black.
Orange, reds, and browns
replaced by gray structures
with prison windows
posing as landscapes.
The almighty blue,
tainted by mass
production.
I want to enjoy.
Energy is key.
All ambitions that are
placed on stifling careers
causing isolation and
bearing no fruit needs
to be re-routed
within us.
For us.
We are all creators.
We are all in control of what
we create. And we control what
is destroyed.
My automobile and myself,
just part of road congestion.
But I'm congestion with my own groove
my own beat
I'm a congestion with life like
everyone else and we can free
each other as
we free
our
selves.

Peter Hite

Me, My Job, and My Manager's Anus

"How was work tonight?" Pete asked.

"It was like a lobotomy with a broken lead pencil, a rusty nail, and a leaky ink ball point pen," I answered.

"Wow! Can it get any worse?" he inquired.

"Well, every night, for the last three weeks, it has progressively gotten worse, two-fold, each hour on the hour," I told him.

Yes, in every sense, this employment sucks. The sub-blue collar work (or "dirty apron," as I call it) of washing dishes makes forty-hour factory line work seem like an executive position at the *Playboy Mansion*.. And the mental stimulus gained from a night's work is equal to that of brain activity after death. Without a doubt, dish washing is one of the worst jobs on the face of planet earth.

The difficulty of the job has never entered my mind. In fact, it is extremely simple. You rinse a dish, put it in the rack, and repeat this until two racks are full. These racks are placed in the dish-tank for about two minutes and removed after the cycle is done. Next they are organized into stacks and then put away to be used again. The entire process takes about ten minutes, and on a Friday or Saturday night, seven or eight hours of dish washing is normal.

When I first came to this cafe, I planned on waiting tables and earning mounds of cash. "Well, all I really have open right now is the dish tank, but if you work hard, we'll move you fast, though," Joe, the kitchen manager said. I'm a hard worker, I thought, and this is the only door to getting tips. "Yes, I'll take it," I said. They say hell is right in front of us at all times - all we have to do is ask for it. And I did.

My first day on the job, I met Will and mastered the art of dish washing in a matter of five hours. Will is a 21-year-old black man whose favorite song is a warped version of "The Star Spangled Banner." In a very keep-your-day-job voice, he would sing, "Oh-o sa-ee can you see/I flunked el-e-men-tar-y." An encore of his rendition of "My Girl" is heard: "My bitch/my bitch/my bitch...Talkin' 'bout my bee-atch!" After these performances, he'd spurt out this noise that sounds like, "Boo-yaah!" I'm not sure of its true meaning, but I think it's a relative expression that could mean either good or bad depending on its context or tone of voice.

The second time I worked with him, I mastered my craft. My biggest mistake was giving out a command: "Hey, Will! These two dishes are still dirty. Rinse them off and wash them again," I said.

"Oh! Aw-ite," he said.

"Huh?!" I asked.

"Sed aw-ite," he answered.

"Satellite?" I asked again.

His face hurled perplexity.

“Wait a minute...Oh! O.K. You said, ‘all right,’” I affirmed.

“Yeh-uh,” he said.

“Wha-? Who’s on first?” I joked.

So my dish colleagues and I have yet to peak in the communication area, but relations between management are extremely “boo-yah.” On my third night of work, I arrived an hour late — without a hat (a strict requirement for the job — so people inadvertently do not consume our hair). I regretfully met Dave, the general manager. His first impression struck me feeling like his anus would encompass the ghost of my job in less than two weeks. I introduced myself as Kip and apologized for my tardiness. “Nice to meet ya, Steve. Where’s you hat?” he asked. I told him of my rather bad day and he studied me up and down for a few seconds. “GET TO WORK!!” he commanded.

The minutes leeches by that night and were nearing close down. I noticed the door to the back was left opened as I walked past the manager’s office. Then his voice came, “Hey...Steve!”

I peeked my head into the door and said, “Yes sir?”

“Could you close the back door to the store before somebody comes in and *BLOWS MY HEAD OFF!*” he said authoritatively.

Were you expecting someone? I thought. “Sure,” I said and closed the door.

“Hey Steve!” he bellowed again, “So whaddaya think about your new job?”

That, of course, wasn’t the best question to ask me. I tried to think of the absolute best adjective possible that wouldn’t smell up the place with word ‘shit.’ “It’s very mawkish,” I said with sincerity.

His eyebrows crinkled with confusion and I wondered if my description was adequate. He thought some more, gave up and said, “Well, that’s good — keep it up!”

“So how was work *tonight*?” Pete asked.

“It was like self-castration,” I said.

“Ouch.”

After two full weeks of this torture, an annoying little sign appeared on the front of the dishtank: “Dishers! THERE WILL BE A MEETING, THURSDAY AT 11:30 P.M. IT IS *NOT* AN OPTION. WE WILL LEARN TO CLOSE CORRECTLY, -Joe.” Joe is the newest manager and the most retentive. Joe always complains about having to wipe a speck of cheese off a wall. Will always tells him something like, “We-uh, It’z like, yuu-no, it’z only a ‘lil cheese an we wuz beezy ta-nite an sheet.” Joe started as a cook four years ago and slowly worked his way up through most of the restaurant positions. The job has not rewarded Joe as it should have; he’s lost all patience with employees and can’t sustain a dishwasher for more than a week or two.

Thursday inevitably came and I, of course, was scheduled to work. I came in at 7 p.m. to find a mountain of dirty dishes and Barry smoking a cigarette in the break room. “Hey, uh, Barry,” I said, “You think maybe

some of the dishes out there could use some soap and water?"

He stopped staring at the wall for a moment and said, "Huh?"

"The dishes? Dish washing? Your job?" I said.

"Oh yeah - I was just taking a break. We're pretty busy tonight, you know—" he said.

"Yes, I kinda figured that from the huge line at the door," I said.

Barry is twenty-five, still lives at home, worships "Iron Maiden," and always wears the inherent numb expression of ignorance. He can't wash dishes too well either. By 11:30 p.m., we were still 'slammed' and Joe started the meeting.

"All right. To begin the meeting, I want to say that we are not closing well at all. Every afternoon I come into work to hear Dave bitching at me because he has to do some laundry or wipe a wall down. Now, we need to get this right guys! It's not that hard," Joe said. "Let's go to the laundry room."

"O.K. Let's see what you guys have done tonight," he said as he opened the dryer. He pulled out a mass of twisted white cloth, a mixture of hand towels and aprons. He began to panic, "Look at this! What the hell's goin' on? Huh?! You guys can't separate towels and aprons? This is a fundamental procedure. Steve! You worked tonight - what happened?"

"Pardon?" I spoke up with sarcastic interest.

"Why aren't these separated?" he asked.

"Considering the volume of business we've done tonight, we were a little short on time for that. I thought the fact that it got done was impressive in and of itself," I answered. Something was gnawing at Joe and I'm sure my comments didn't help. It took fifteen minutes to explain the backward logic of keeping the laundry done separately, even on busy nights.

"All right, now I want to talk very seriously about the tank area. Every night I come back to find one of you sipping a Coke and wiping your forehead," he said. "Did you guys know it is against FDA regulations, federal law, state law, and more importantly, it is against our corporation headquarter's rules. And yet each night I see you guys drinking pop near clean dishes and handling them right after. What's the real problem here guys? Are you too lazy to walk to the break room? Jesus, that's why we have one."

I decided to speak up, "Joe, I just don't see why I can't just put my glass on top of the dishwasher and rinse my hands before and after drinking. The rule is stupid. Period."

His eyes rolled back into his head, "People have died from this sort of thing!"

My eyes did a complete revolution in their sockets, "Now, Joe, I know you're not serious. Th—"

"You don't think I'm serious? Joe interrupted. "Food poisoning has afflicted and killed many people in the restaurant business. The next man I see drinking in the tank area will be made an example to the rest of you."

I hope it is me, I thought. Tonight.

Joe continued, "Next, I want to talk about everyone being late excessively. It's gettin' out of hand. Steve, you've been late three times and you've only been her two weeks. Will, you simply have no concept of time. And Barry, do you even know how to read a clock? With hands? How about a digital? You guys are gonna hafta start taking a little pride in your jobs. If you don't—"

"Wait a sec," I had to interrupt this time, "Did you say pride? Am I being proud of something? Joseph, our hands touch people's tooth boogers and you expect any degree of pride to come from that?"

"Look, Steve, I know this isn't the cleanest or the funnest job," he said, "but you all came here for a job and I gave you one. So start showing some respect and show up on time!"

The entire meeting was a dull lecture given by a man who gesticulated and toked on a cigarette nervously every few seconds. Oddly enough, he must have felt like he connected with us because he seemed excited at the end of the meeting—almost like he was going to throw his hand in front of us, tell us to circle up, put in a duke and synonymously yell, "Go Dishers!"

"Hey Kip! Whassup? How was work tonight?" Pete asked.

"It was like ripping off your fingernails, one by one, with a flathead screwdriver," I answered.

"Man, when are you going to quit that job? You hate it with every cell in you body. Quit. JUST QUIT." he suggested.

"Pete, I want to, but I just started three weeks ago. Besides, I talked to my dad yesterday and told him how much I hated it. I also said I might give them my 'two-weeks.' "

"What did he say?"

"He said something like, 'You know Kip, when I was in Vietnam, me and Jerry Guiser would work latrine duty together. Every night, we would clean the seats where men would release their bowels all day—probably the most demeaning job I've ever done. But you know what? We stuck with it. We kept at it and after we got used to it—it almost became a tad bit fun. Well, I take that back, it was at least palatable. Do you know what Jerry is doing today? He's an executive at the Ford Motor Company—designing cars. Just stick with it, Kip, you'll be fine.' So I responded with, 'Sure, tell Custer that the longer he stays, the better it gets.' "

On the third week, I was an hour-and-a-half late and Dave was working. I thought for sure they would send me right back out the door I walked into. But, of course...no.

"Steve! How ya doin'?" Dave said, precariously smiling. His wife must've gone down on him this morning.

"Pretty good," I said and waved to Joe.

"What's up, Kip?" Joe asked.

"Oh, you know - just getting psyched up to wash some dishes," I said.

Dave, for once, took a sincere notice of me. Looking at me strangely, he said, "They call you 'Chip'?"

"No, it's Kip?" Joe asked.

Clove Cigarettes

We sit in a corner booth in the State Street Denny's
In silence I draw pictures on the table top
with my finger tip
and you empty packets of sugar into the amber glass ashtray

I watch your reflection in the window
as you light your cigarette

You exhale,

the air

the time

the place

is thick with smoke

I close my eyes and feel the air

The burning

soothing

stinging

kissing puff swirls round me

I inhale the velvet cloud

Karin Wraley

Loving the Barmaid

Swirls of smoke mound
 a cancerogenic like an early Irish morning.
 Brass etches the oak bar.
 Bird men sit perched over their drinks,
 chirping open mouthed about their
 wives that howl and drinking
 more yellow beer.

Four poker heads sit
 like looking glasses peering at open another
 finding out who's got the high cards
 and who's throwing down their ranch style house
 and three screaming kids on the next hand.

Misty, the barmaid
 swings her dusty eyes my way
 asking if I'll hot shower with her tonite.
 She has scars on the back
 of her hands from filling too many glasses.
 Her scratched eye flutters about the three gutted
 man she cut off and the beer he busted her with.

At two a.m. she shovels her arms
 through her yellow Morton salt lady coat
 and winks me to her patchwork colored car.
 Her curls bob across her forehead.
 She whimpers
 with the passing of my asphalt stained hand
 over her frame. I apologize for my drunkenness
 and road weary mind set.

She drives me past the car top carrying circus
 and invites me back to her stage of a room
 where she acts orgasms
 and spins me.
 I shake my head crying about the lust
 of a convict and I think like sculpture
 I might love her tonight and not just sex her.

As we enter she turns off her lights
 and I turn off my consciousness to the rent money due
 last Monday and the cut off heat.
 Good night, lover.

Adam Ellis

Clove Cigarettes

We sit in a corner booth in the State Street Denny's
In silence I draw pictures on the table top
with my finger tip
and you empty packets of sugar into the amber glass ashtray

I watch your reflection in the window
as you light your cigarette

You exhale,

the air

the time

the place

is thick with smoke

I close my eyes and feel the air

The burning

soothing

stinging

kissing puff swirls round me

I inhale the velvet cloud

Karin Wraley

Loving the Barmaid

Swirls of smoke mound
 a cancerogenic like an early Irish morning.
 Brass etches the oak bar.
 Bird men sit perched over their drinks,
 chirping open mouthed about their
 wives that howl and drinking
 more yellow beer.

Four poker heads sit
 like looking glasses peering at open another
 finding out who's got the high cards
 and who's throwing down their ranch style house
 and three screaming kids on the next hand.

Misty, the barmaid
 swings her dusty eyes my way
 asking if I'll hot shower with her tonite.
 She has scars on the back
 of her hands from filling too many glasses.
 Her scratched eye flutters about the three gutted
 man she cut off and the beer he busted her with.

At two a.m. she shovels her arms
 through her yellow Morton salt lady coat
 and winks me to her patchwork colored car.
 Her curls bob across her forehead.
 She whimpers
 with the passing of my asphalt stained hand
 over her frame. I apologize for my drunkenness
 and road weary mind set.

She drives me past the car top carrying circus
 and invites me back to her stage of a room
 where she acts orgasms
 and spins me.
 I shake my head crying about the lust
 of a convict and I think like sculpture
 I might love her tonight and not just sex her.

As we enter she turns off her lights
 and I turn off my consciousness to the rent money due
 last Monday and the cut off heat.
 Good night, lover.

Adam Ellis

The Lottery

“What happens to a dream deferred?”

-Langston Hughes

Paul reached for his wallet in the rain.

He pulled it out of his left jean pocket and opened it to the computer chip card which opened the gate to the factory. His wife, Ruth, watched him with a smile from the photograph in his wallet. The four dollars he had were getting soggy, and he remembered he needed to pick up his wallet. The four dollars he had were getting soggy, and he remembered he needed to pick up bread, bologna, and mustard for the kids' lunches at the 7-Eleven on his way home. Ruth was almost out of everything.

The red light above the fence made an eerie glow when it caught the late-night mist. Paul slid his card across a wet mechanism and the light changed to green. He stepped past the barbed-wire fence. Through the drizzle, the closed metal building came up on him quickly as he moved toward the mouth of the dock.

The plant was sprawling; from the highway it looked like enormous blocks stacked beside each other. There was no place else for it to go; the farmer whose field bordered the east side refused to sell and the city of Hopewell owned everything. Langston's Aluminum Manufacturing Plant had no plans for expansion.

In fact, lay-off seemed to be the only thing a body could count on in the plant, thought Paul. The rain was icy, and November meant the lay-off season was at hand. Paul dashed for the orange light inside beyond the dock.

He was wet when he punched the time clock at 11 p.m.

“Hey, Paul, you win yet?” Eric hollered at him over the whir of machinery.

Paul shook his head, not quite grinning. “Not yet. But someday.”

“Never knew a man to play the same lottery numbers every goddamn week. I got the stupid things memorized you been playing 'em so long. Don't you think if one thing's not working, you ought to try another?”

Edith, who washed the tables in the breadroom, hollered back at Eric, “Man's got a right to his own numbers. It can't hurt his chances, anyhow. Maybe he thinks they're lucky.” She suddenly got inspired. “I played the same bingo card for eight years at the VFW because I knew it had luck in it. And you know what? I won a hundred dollars last year!”

Eric sneered, “Sure, you're pretty fucking lucky, lately. Edith. Or you would be if the bingo cards weren't five dollars a pop.” Edith shot him a warning look and threw her towel at him. He ducked it and fell into step with Paul, who was shaking the rain off his hat. Eric shook his head and asked, “Ever heard of an *umbrella*, Paul?”

“Too much trouble. Can't mess with some umbrella and get my

toolbox and lunch all at the same time. I only got two hands, you can ask the boss.”

Arnold picked just that time to make an appearance. Anyone who worked the midnight shift would say Arnold had a sixth sense about when people were talking about him, especially if someone was mad at him. The second someone muttered, for instance, a harmless “sonuvabitch” under their breath, or flipped him the bird, he would be right on their heels, asking, “Hey, what’s your problem? You talking to me?” full of Italian attitude. It was a gift reserved for foremen and mothers. It worked with lafing or reaching for a sip of coffee, too. Arnold had a sixth sense.

“Shit, Arnold, you damned near scared Paul to death! He thought he was in trouble,” Eric yelled with a laugh.

The graying foreman ignored Eric. Paul squeezed in his earplugs while Arnold explained that the orders were low, even for Monday. So he wanted him to put a fresh coat of paint on the safety lines and—hey, while he was at it, he could get the trash hoppers painted, too. He probably wouldn’t get it all finished, so Arnold offered to allow Paul to come in four hours early tomorrow.

Paul agreed quickly. Overtime pay was scarce this time of year. He headed for the supply room and dug up a dirty pan and a half-gallon of dull yellowpaint. He washed the roller with paint thinner. Arnold’s words replayed in his head, “...Orders were low. Even for a Monday.”

Paul had two girls, still in grade school. Jamie was his big girl; she was in the third grade. Emma had started preschool in the fall. Paul had remarried five years ago, to a woman with a broken marriage in her past and a baby who needed a father. He helped raise Jamie and they had Emma a year later. He thought of Ruth fondly; she was everything his first wife, Nance, was not. Ruth wanted children, even at the late age of 32. She rose at 5:30 every morning to pack the kids’ lunches, she kissed him goodbye when he left in the night, and she usually had something warming on the back burner for him when he got off in the early morning. She asked about his day. She took care of things.

And she didn’t drink. He and Nance were young when they eloped, only 19 and 21. He remembered the first time he saw her, at Shifty’s, the lone bar in Hopewell. She saw him come in the door, and threw him a smile from the corner of her pink mouth. She was leaning across a pool table, sucking on a Marlboro Light. She furrowed her brow, concentrated on the shot. Short, tight cut-offs clung to the longest pair of legs he’d ever seen. Her skinny feet were strapped into red high heels. She missed the shot, but from the looks of the other men in the bar, she hit her mark. Every pair of eyes in Shifty’s was on her. She sauntered up to Paul and threw her arms around his neck. “Take me away, stranger,” she asked him, and he did.

They were married three weeks later and tried to make it work for nine long years. She drank and fooled around for most of the time, raising hell while Paul was at work all night, and he found her passed out on their bed about twice a week. She never said they didn’t want kids, but they

didn't have any. She complained about gaining weight, even a few pounds; when in reality she was all bones. Paul suspected that Nance stayed on the pill, even after they afforded to move from their one bedroom apartment into a small house. She screamed at him, full of hell-fire and brimstone, that he would make one fine daddy, always either working or sleeping or complaining that he was laid off. She'd say she couldn't raise the kids all by herself. Paul would hold his temper and tell her, "This is the best life I can give. A lot of other people's kids grow up with a lot less."

"Fuck other people," she would mutter, retreat to their bedroom and slam the door. Then the house was quiet. It was eerily, uncomfortably harshly quiet after the fight; and Paul would pull down the blankets from the closet shelf and sleep on the couch again.

Finally Nance left. She followed a young cowboy home to Arizona from the bar. A month later, Paul was served with divorce papers.

He put the the past behind him, and eventually found Ruth. He had two beautiful, ornery, girls. His life was better; and worse. Lay-off was much more difficult to accept with the kids around. They expected Christmas, and he wanted to give it to them. But with November marking the end of the work season, sometimes the unemployment check went to pay the gas bill. And the electric bill. And the mortgage. But he and Ruth always managed to stretch it out. Every year for six years they had decorated a tree and placed tiny, wrapped packages under it. Every Christmas they ate dinner together around the fancy oak dining room table that Ruth's parents bought them as a wedding gift. Paul thanked God at that table every year, too, for providing for him, Ruth, and the girls.

Paul knew low orders in November were common, but still he worried. He painted until the buzzer announced the end of his shift, dreaming the night away of the things he could do with 10 million dollars.

At 7 a.m. sharp Paul clocked out, grabbed his lunch pail from his locker, and slipped on his heavy flannel. By this time in the morning, his boots felt heavy on his feet and the joints in his hands ached from the work. He carried himself out the doors of the dock, past the gate, and into the wet, black parking lot. The weather had not changed overnight.

He unlocked the truck door and climbed inside. It felt good to be out of the rain. He started the Ford up with a roar and headed down towards the 7-Eleven, just like every morning. He drove steadily through the rain. Its neon beer lights shone through the storm, guiding him to the cracked parking lot on the corner. He grabbed his hat from the seat next to him, held it over his head, and dashed in the rain now coming down in torrents. It pelted his face, soaked through his old boots, and washed his dirt-streaked face. The door jingled as he stepped inside.

He eyed the lottery machine that stood large, securing one entire corner of the crowded, little store. Then he headed straight for the bread, and asked for two-dollars worth of lunch meat. Too late, he remembered he only had four dollars and change on him, and he hadn't bought his lottery ticket yet. He looked down at the white-paper wrapped lunchmeat. He

should have only got a dollar's worth; that would have made lunch for today, and he could have picked more up tomorrow. If he didn't buy French's mustard, Jamie wouldn't eat the bologna sandwich. He smiled and picked up the mustard. He would buy the girls lunch.

Charlie was working the counter. "Mornin', Paul, how was your night?"

"Pretty slow. Wet out there this morning. Getting awful cold, too."

"Sure, well, old man winter is just around the corner. Hey you hear? The lottery is up to 10 million. No one won last night."

"That's a lot of money." He paused. "What's this stuff come to?" He pulled out the crumpled bills and some loose change. His purchases totaled \$4.05.

He gave the lottery machine a last look, and his eye caught the black sky, the icy rain, the wet roads. He thought of Ruth out driving to pick up the special mustard for Jamie's lunch. He could skip the lottery ticket.

"Well, that money will make someone real happy this time around. Once it gets that high, everyone wants to play." Paul placed his rough hand carefully under the paper bag and stepped back out into the cold early morning.

"Say, Paul," Charlie called after him, "What would you do with ten million dollars?"

"Buy Ruth a new dress," he said, and the bells chimed as he left the store.

Paul arrived home in time to eat breakfast with Ruth and the girls. He stayed up and read the funny pages from the newspaper to Emma before she went to school, so he crawled into his bed late. "You're making it to bed later and later every day, do you know that?" Ruth asked her sleepy husband. She looked at Paul fondly. She decided to let him oversleep a half an hour so he could have just a few more minutes of rest. He kicked off his shoes, kissed her, and allowed her to pull the blankets up to his chin. His last thought was of Ruth in the old midnight blue dress she wore in the photo in his wallet. "I've got to buy her a new dress," he thought, and then all was dark.

At 6:20 p.m., Paul sat straight up in bed and looked at the clock. Something was wrong. He remembered with a start that he had agreed to go in four hours early to work. "Shoot," he muttered as he grabbed for his work shirt and awkwardly forced his jeans on. Boots, lunch, coat; "No time for dinner, honey, I forgot I'm going in at seven," he said kissing Ruth on the top of her head; and he was out the door.

Evening was settling in, but he missed the sunset as he drove crazily on the near-frozen roads toward the plant. He slid the pick-up into its parking place and checked his watch. Still three minutes till. He smiled in spite of his predicament as he thought of Arnold, staring at the door, then staring at the time clock, then staring at the machines that needed prepped for running and wondering what was keeping Paul. He hurried.

Stress lined his face and the vein across his left temple thumped. He

checked his watch again.

The walk to the plant felt like ten million miles whenever he was running late.

“Hey Paul,” the guy guarding the dock called out to him to his retreating backside. Usually, Paul chatted sympathetically with the man, but today he simply held his hand up in greeting and kept moving. He thought he heard the guard mutter angrily—something about money and courage. He stepped nervously through the plant, sweating profusely now in spite of the cold. He felt sick to the gut. Through bloodshot eyes disturbed too soon from sleep, Paul eyed the ticking clock at the end of the rows of machinery. He barely had time to punch his time card, so he didn’t notice the stares clinging to his every move.

“Congratualations, man.”

“Yeah, Paul, if not me, then you.”

“You got cousins calling you from out of state yet? Just remember who your real friends are, got that, Paul?”

Co-workers mingled around him slapping him on the back and praising. His confusion mounted and he wanted to question, but couldn’t form the words in his mouth. He feared the confirmation. He stood in the center of the circle of poor men and women, and listened to their words silently, protesting the truth that had begun to make itself clear. Eric separated himself from the crowd and faced his friend.

“What are you doing here, old man?” Eric voiced the question, and a cold silence fell on his audience.

Paul looked into the challenging gazes surrounding him. He grabbed at his throat for air, not understanding, feeling suffocated, sick with confusion.

“What are you talking about?” he managed to ask, very humbly.

“Just figured you would stay home or get the hell out of here or something. Can’t believe you came back to this hole. You want to rub it in the boss’s face or something? You won, man. Go home. Think of ways to spoil your pretty wife and kids with that ten million dollars.”

The air was dead and Paul felt crowded, hot; Eric’s face swam before him, juggled, tumbled in a terrible world that refused to stay still.

“You okay, pal?” Eric finally asked, and Paul was aware of hands reaching out, groping and pulling at his clothes, removing the coat he still wore and loosening the buttons of his worn flannel. He suddenly saw Ruth, in her midnight blue dress, the stars behind her ten million miles away, and then everything was black.

Katrina Seymour

I Watch My Mother

I watch my mother dig into the earth
Her hands in green smeared gardening gloves
pulling at the tangled veins that pump sugar water
to the weeds
Her bare knees sinking and settling
into the spongy back lawn
like my father in his recliner.

She works in the dirt
in the heat
on her knees
until it is done.

Then she pushes herself up.

Even inside the house
I can hear the joints in her body
crack and echo
as she stands.

Looking down
we both see them
The prints of those knees
those knotted
round
knobs
in the grass
Two sunken circles in the ground
printed on the earth
like the signature
on a birth certificate.

Karin Wraley

Birth Of MSG

Deep in the bowels
Of some lab scientific
Life was synthesized
By two breeds unspecific.

The father was dog
Of some sort, hard to tell;
The mother, a buffalo
For sure by the smell.

And the fruit of their passions,
Or rather the meat,
Changed America forever
In the way that we eat.

This creature, technically titled
"the dogalo,"
Is more commonly referred to
As "the don'twannaknow."

Currently being bred
For profit alone,
The dogalo is staple food
To the All-American home.

This pink-fatty substance,
A feast in a can,
with distinct processed smell,
Which clings to the pan,

Is made from Vienna
Sausages ground into mush,
The dogalo's earlobes,
Esophagus, and tush.
Unprecedented in flavor,
Appearance and texture,
This potted meat,
Pork rind, and powdered milk mixture

Stands alone, unique;
Not bologna, nor ham,
But born with the dogalo
Was our sub-processed SPAM.

Heather Spessard

Bad Habits

Roll them between your fingers,
Flick them across the room.
Feel the mushy mucus membranes,
Set them flying—ZOOM!

Squeeze them between your fingers,
Encrusted with toe-jam scum.
Flexible crescent-shaped bones,
Nibble on them—YUM!

Pick your nose,
clip your toes;
Just make sure
no one knows.

Slimy or crusty, soft or hard,
Eat them, you don't care.
Picking away in bed at night,
You've got one in your hair!

Calcium, potassium,
Nutrients galore.
Snacking away my friend, you find
You're only wanting more!

Pick your nose,
clip your toes;
Just make sure
no one knows.

Chuck Salmons

Ripley's Belief

ripley's belief
well, I believe it
weird, macabre visions
playing in sick mind
jumping through the hole
pulling feverishly on my brain stem
"hey, look at me, I'm a freak!"
nails through the nipples
misplaced pubes
mesmerizing, enticing
deliciously delighting my soul
shocking my eyes with glee

look at the Siamese guys
connected by the gross
bones, veins, and sinew stretching between
intruding my thoughts
invading my emotions,
evading my essence
"hey, Tom Thumb, you're a damn mutant!"
but I relish his secret separation
if I had six toes, would I make the show?
maybe so
job security at carnivals
forever

Jason Green

beautifonic sucksand

standing roof-topped
 edge-ledged
 christ crossed
 readied for gravity to take effect
 and for all questions to be answered

summer's final death breath
 tonguing my baby-ass-bare
 balloon head

whistling whisper hums
 in the canals outside my eardrums
 resonating moans of "yesssss"

Then

seam-ripped sky
 offers a cloud
 exploding without resistance

pouring a gajillion gallons
 of ultra fortress blue
 directly into my retinas
 momentarily
 from miles away

leaving my brain euphorically saturated
 with the beauty of this color—
 and completely unaware of
 it's job to balance my body

reluctantly remembering
 original intention
 and

slip slipping slidably subconsciously
 away
 into

my

gravey

g

r

a

v

i

t

y

Kip Tobin

eight o'clock on vine

gravityless, and chilled,
 the black moon like
 cracked pavement, on
 which I sit, you, there
 mumbling something
 infuriating, I laugh
 at the blue balloons
 you pop. I eat them
 up string and all

marriage

6 whole loaves of bread
 on the avacado green formica
 counter waiting for jubilant
 aunts with dripping red lips
 made for kissing
 and 10 pounds each of roast beef,
 and turkey in the Fridgedaire,
 yellowed from father's
 cigars
 baby sister has her sticky
 fingers in the jam and is
 leaving small purple prints
 all down the hall

Alyce Frankenhoff

Painting in B Major

My hands, painting, are birds in flight
 colorful, confident, free
 skating across taut canvas
 dive bombing painted cats;
 feathered fingers, feathered friends
 magically pull images from air.
 Forget Peavey—acrylic paint is my speaker to the world.
 Listen, I'm painting an aria:
 baritones boom naphthol crimson, sap green
 tenors trumpet emerald, ultramarine, cobalt blue
 Colorful music, musical color floods the air,
 a forgotten faucet. Lucky the neighbors don't mind
 and my landlord is deaf and colorblind.
 Altos hum cerulean harmonies as
 a soprano flutes a cadmium orange lemon melody.
 Carmina Burina Blueberry, Aida orange crush;
 sweet melodic stew, Mozart meringue
 eaten with a plastic picnic spoon.

Melissa Gotsch

Prisoner Of War

If you came home this autumn
after twenty-five years
of white rice
and dirty water
what would you think of the leaves

Would you pick up
a yellow orange
of an oak
a deep red
of a walnut
a fresh peach
of a maple
and lick up and down
their veiny backs
tasting Florida orange juice
hot cherry cobbler
your wife's twenty-two year old lips

Would you find your children
who became women
your wife
who is someone else's
sit them in a circle
on the back lawn
at the old house
and tell them that the grass
tastes like mint candy
birch bark
is really white chocolate
and the neighbor's marigolds
are fresh squeezed lemonade?

Karin Wraley

Addicted Utopia

Popping pills,
energy surges,
purges souls of sorrow,
tomorrow and the next,
releasing rhythmical rushes,
lush landscapes appear nowhere,
there,
hair in face,
creates crazy kaleidoscopes,
spinning, swirling,
whirling about brains,
sanes turn insane
for bloodletting

In bodies of blue,
boobs bob
up, down,
up again,
fish-filled water
feeling the flesh
caressing, undressing
the mind of worries,
needling the naked nipples,
ripples in puddles in pools,
drool that is cool,
dripping
with liquid life

Searching, perching
poised by porcelain gods,
puking, rebuking the revelry
devilry dominates to disdain,
invading veins,
pain consumes, assuming
you will die,
trying, lying to selves,
elves of blue creep, crawl
sprawl within vitality,
reality runs, undone
sweating, petting the palms,
psalms can never calm

Syringes swimming,
 primrose capsules contemplate,
 instigate incandescent convulsions,
 revulsions reveal, kneeling,
 peeling the puckered lips apart,
 vomiting volcanoes
 of tomato, potato-like skin,
 thin leather, lathering the
 foam from the mouth,
 tearing eyes, cries form
 in ears, you only hear,
 nearing to the bottle,
 the bible of blues

Jason Green

Observations from Suburbia

Guttural groan in chorus
—like the primal chant of some Neanderthal tribe in ritual praise of their
dim god—

while greedily guzzling flesh
flesh

Wide-eyed amazement from
cro-magnon blondes
and plenty of free-flowing libation
to dull what awareness
they might have accidentally found.

Men cooing at ball-carrying dot-matrix images
like they're trying to seduce Fate—

No,
like they're trying to rape Fate while making her believe she's been made
love to.

All for a touch..down.

But they're happy.

Radiation red and basalt blue
walk up a building across the street
itsy-bitsy spider style
pulsing out a message
that gnaws on brain fiber,

grates against you until it slides a smooth devilish cheek
into your vacant imbecile acquiescent smile
saying:

BUY MORE

EAT FLESH

LICK THE BLOOD OF THE STREET

FROM FAT WHITE GOLD-RINGED FINGERS

lick the blood of the street:

the classless underclass that feeds your luxury from their life-source.

A spigot

in the stomach

open full

pouring out spine:

they've tapped our will to season their Monday-Nite Only Chicken Wings

and pay for their big screen TV

so they can watch football

and mute uncomfortable infomercials

about the starvation in Africa

oh oH OH! GROooooaans
 out another nearly missed
 sticky fumble
 on a backseat in the backstreet
 moving backasswards from love into solo ecstasy:
 even if it came at the same time, they'd swear they'd done it alone.

Money passes
 Exchanging fists of
 money
 as someone yells touchdown!
 and two locker-room buddies
 with pimpled faces and sheepish grins
 pay off a bet
 that had to do with loose Suzie
 and a touch...down.

10-1 odds against and split beer
 Puddles of misshapen anger at
 grown men who dance out the
 ghosts of righteous wars on a sterile artificially green turf
 that might have sung of mighty heroes
 if blood had stopped flowing from the helpless
 and turned on the sword arm.

Football bars and stone geese have a lot in common.

Aaron Carter

A Fable

Once upon a time
some distant citizens
got tired of looking at
the adult bookstore
squatting its filthy
carcass by the road on
the edge of town and
decided to take a
stand.

They parked their
cars a half mile down
the road, stormed in
with sledgehammers
and gasoline, sent all
the perverts running
for their lives
screaming

Oh \$#!%

and burned the place
to the ground.

But when they got
back to their cars they
discovered some
Amish terrorists had
snuck in on their
black stealth war
buggies and towed
them over a cliff.

And then our decent
citizens thought back
to their houses filled
with electric heating
and running water
and TV's and VCR's
and

Oh \$#!%

Kevin Brown

Somewhere In a Senior Citizens Home...

Where only animals might find
contentment,

I see a woman.

Like a sloth, she drags herself
across a cold tile floor,
through heavy doors,
into a colorless courtyard;
the wheels and frames
of her steel companion
cold, lifeless.

She wonders when death
will free her from this
cell.

Her old eyes stare at me,
through a leathery hide,
creased and folded,
longing for an end
to days, months,
years of loneliness.
She no longer knows
the names of her children,
or why that young man who calls her
“grandma”
visits once a week,
for an hour or so.
She sees things, but
can't speak them clearly;
the loss of her teeth
slurs her speech.

Why do I feel embarrassed?

Fearing I too may be
trapped
in this place,
death looming, asking
myself why Jr. didn't come,
I watch her from across the hall
and find my answer.

Chuck Salmons

Courtroom Chalks: 1961 Justice in Mississippi

I.
Late afternoon dust spins across the starchy courtroom.
The fan hums, within the breathless room
shoveling air into mouths.

Case 117B called to order for sentencing, a bailiff
whose polyester blue pants swallow gulp after gulp
of fat, while drowning. His silver criminal bracelets
stained like the inners of a wine goblet
with oppressed blood: bind the convicted.

A plaid skirted, hair bunned woman,
bifocuses while typing stenographer style.
Her mind muddles out blue ink codes
recording facts. Justice, stands screaming in the corner
like a man being stoned. A murder being ignored.

Enter left,
Judge Rogained with a white head of hair,
wisdom lines grate his forehead like the Grand Canyon.
His mind announces sentences confusing pronouns
with people. His hands always washed in red wine
gavel slam others decisions always burying the guilty,
in concrete two rooms for lifetimes and freeing Anglos
to farms where they slaughter cattle.

Two defendants, white like a southern bowling alley
smile tobacco stained at each other while standing for their
sentence. Their apparel consists
of their Sunday suits, mother sewn,
whose expertise is making white costumes for campfires.
Their hair drips with grease,
like Emmitt Till's head bursting with blood.
Each turns over his hands post murder scrubbed
with mechanic soap.

The jurors, sitting apostles.
Bleach faced perched within their wooden showroom.
They blow cheek kisses to Justice while holding
their wallets packed tight. Witnesses to a courtroom play.
A black youth dressed Chicago slid
off his Greyhound in Mississippi. He had approached a belle
dressed Southern style with a hoop skirt.

Greetings, misinterpreted.
 Barn beating,
 four fly covered, brown cows witnessed truth,
 moos aren't allowable evidence.
 Battered found along the banks of the river,
 bloated like a woman's pregnant womb
 baseball beaten and manhood removed.

Two jurors understood what it was like
 to beat a black man like a bad dog. They cover their ears
 Justice screams through their hands and into their minds,
 bricked with prejudice. Their spears hidden beneath
 their chairs as they cast dice
 on Chicago slacks.

The bailiff waddles the verdict to the judge.
 "Not guilty."

II.

Five men stand white cone headed around
 a flaming crucifix, two deaf, one slurping vintage 1937 off his
 fingers, two with greasy headdresses. They preach
 salvation, speak tradition, and save no one.

III.

A white marble headstone with hand hammered letters
 muddies as fresh soil runs with the rain. Field flowers brown,
 dropping seeds. The wooden coffin begins
 its deterioration and the cross carved on the front
 fills with mud, burying justice.

Adam Ellis

On the Rocks

Large cold fish ogle
expensive older women in
the marketplace.
Sharp corners of ice cubes
point into their beautifully scaled backs
as they nestle into tightly packed coolness.
Scents of Turkish coffee, basil, cloves
cling to the women's scarves and
linger for days.

The women compare cost,
fillet recipes,
husbands.
Their fur coats shudder, repulsed
by the thick dangling salamis and
corpulent glazed hams.

A diamond ring glints
in a trout's eye,
a fleeting flash of light.
Slabs of swordfish steak
wrapped gently in butcher paper,
the perch are sorry to see him go.

After the women move on,
the fish chatter about plum sauces
and how nice it was
to breathe
water.

Carolyn Gregg

Dharma Chatter During a Rainstorm

Outside people hold
vinyl shrouds from the dark. Blackness of rain
and feet make footprints
gray on the concrete.

Inside William Tell's faucet
drips endlessly and here I sit waiting
for Mother Louise
to come and knight me with a fry pan.
Candlelight pours from a pitcher.
The eye burn of sleeplessness
crowds the woman
standing in a dress
with long sleeves
That is covered with suns and dandelions
under the orange yellow streetlight.

The dharma
cries in the stomped grass
and sings about my porch
and the three freckle speckled woman
I play with in the table.

Some New York Joe
stumbles past my house,
in a blue pin striped suit
stripes running together
because of the rain.
He keeps rambling about a date
(his birthday, the eighth of April)
he forgot to keep cause of liquor.

It's my turn to spin the cards
and they send up aces
and a joker
that is hidden beneath
the cross colored jeans I wear.

After the rainstorm's over
 the dharma's megaphone
 quiets.
 I play alone
 winning only the money
 I lay down.

Adam Ellis

The Lying Nun

"You're crazy!" Josephine's friend said to her, over lunch-break at Cafe' Mimosa. Josephine very rarely had something to say, but she really caught Cheryl off guard this time.

"Keep your voice down." Josephine studied Cheryl for a moment, placing her cup of coffee down gently. "I think it will be wonderful and if you don't like it, then you don't get to be its godmother."

"Its godmother? Jo, it isn't even made yet, and now I have to take care of it in case you die in an accident or something? Christ, Jo, I don't have the time!" Cheryl looked around her, as if everyone in the restaurant had heard. She turned back to Josephine. "Honestly. What's happened to you?" She looked concerned.

"Tick, tick, tick, Cheryl. I want a baby because I want to be a mom. I always loved *my* mom. I want to breastfeed and teach the colors to it and wake up at three in the morning and change its diaper and sing to it the lullaby my mom sang me."

"How does it go?"

"What?" Jo asked.

"How does the lullaby go? Let me hear it."

Josephine leaned over the little table where they had just finished their lunch. Very quietly she began, "Sleep, my child, and peace attend thee, all through the night. Guardian angels God will send thee, all through the night." Jo had closed her eyes and although Cheryl could hardly hear her singing, she concentrated on her friend's face until she was finished. "Though the weary hours are creeping, hill and dale in slumber steeping..." Jo opened one eye to see if her friend was still listening. She was. "While my Josephine is sleeping, all through the night."

She straightened up and explained, "Of course I'll put the baby's name in where I sang mine, but you get the picture."

Cheryl said, "Yeah, I guess you really do want to have a baby. But why don't you want to have a father?"

"Well, it's occurred to me that I have recently only attracted nice, polite, over-worked men. And that is not the kind of man I want to live with for the rest of my life. I've been set up more times than a bunch of pins at the bowling alley, Cheryl, and I just don't like what I've seen. I don't want to settle for ho-hum, and I am old enough to make a choice that I feel happy with, and I don't want a husband!" It was Josephine's turn to look around the busy cafe.

"So what are you going to, ah, do? You're going to a hospital and pick out a tube like at a grocery store? 'Yes, I'll take that one please, the philosopher, brown eyes, and won the 1985 Waltz competition.' I mean, how do you know?"

"I agree. That's why I ruled it out completely. I really have to know the guy, at least ask him some questions, all I have to do is pick him out! Besides," Josephine laughed, "it's been so long!"

“You *are* crazy. But it will be kind of exciting. Listen we ought to be heading back. How about you coming over tonight and we’ll talk about this ‘Perfect Daddy?’ Carl has his poker game tonight, so how about it?” Cheryl was rummaging through her purse to find some coins for the tip.

“Okay,” Josephine said as she stood up and reached for her coat on the back of her chair. “I’ll call before I come over.”

Josephine remembered singing the lullaby to her friend as she was heading for the laundromat a couple of weeks later. She had taken some time with her appearance, because “shopping for a father” as Cheryl put it, was a 24-hour job. She was in a really good mood too, singing to herself as she drove the short jog to the Wash-n-Wait. As she reached the door, her stomach gave a little jump as she noticed there was only one other person in the place, and a good-looking male person at that. She pushed her way in, and plopped her basket in front of the long line of washers. The man looked up, and smiled.

“Hi,” he said. Ooh, white teeth.

“Hi there.”

“Come to do your laundry?”

“How’d you guess?” Oh God, she was already flirting. *Slow down, Jo*, she thought to herself.

“Oh, the clothes, the soap, it was easy.” He smiled again. *Hey he’s friendly*, she thought. And, after a quick look, no wedding band or pinky ring to decide if her attentions would be thwarted. Hmmm. And at least forty-five minutes to see if she was right.

“Are you from around here?” she asked.

“Yeah, I live about 10 minutes away in Tenacre apartments.”

“Oh, I have a little house off of Shelby!”

“I love those houses, the neighborhoods. They’re so cozy.” She started to put her laundry in the washer as she spoke.

“I’ve lived there for about two years now, and I love it.”

“What are you doing?” He sounded alarmed as he grabbed her hand from pouring the soap in. M-hmm, warm hands, please do not let me go.

“I’m adding soap. It helps to get the clothes clean, you know. Otherwise they just go for a light swim,” she teased.

“No, you’ve got your darks mixed in with your whites, uh...what is your name?”

She couldn’t remember. “Josephine?”

“That’s lovely.”

“It was my grandmother’s before mine.”

“And how did your grandmother do *her* washing, Josephine?”

“With a washboard? And one of those wringer things?” Where was this going? It was a strange pick-up line if she had ever heard one.

“Right,” he continued. “And I bet she also didn’t wash her light and dark clothes together.”

"Okay, what's *your* name?"

"Brett."

"Well, Brett, I guess my grandmother was a lot smarter than me, huh?"

"Listen, if you wash your clothes like that, everything will come out grey."

"Oh, I've never noticed. It's just my t-shirts and um, my underwear and things."

"Well, you certainly don't want those to be grey, you're not a mouse, you know." He was very close to her. He was moving in, and they both knew it.

"Then what am I?"

"You're a . . . a tiger."

"Grrrr." She laughed. A tiger, huh? He was coming on to her, and she didn't care. She loved it. She loved his wavy hair, his dark brown leather jacket, his dark blue sweater, and if he had six toes, she'd love them, too. Oh, Chance, what a night to go do your laundry!

"So, are you going to separate your colors? I mean, really Josephine, it's only another 75 cents. Listen, just put your darks in here with mine. I've got room."

"And have our clothes interlacing with each other, entangled together in the warm water, forcing the sweat to come clean in the surrounding suds?" Josephine was teasing again.

"M-hmm. I wish I had known how laundry can be such an intense... personal experience." He made a move closer to her, so close that she thought he was going to kiss her, but he was selecting her dark clothes out of her washer and dropping them into his. She stood still, willing her every muscle to grow by an inch, just so she'd be touching him, pressed up against him...

They spent the next hour and a half doing crosswords, sitting on the washers and telling jokes, sharing laundry tips. When their dryers buzzed at them to tell them their clothes were done, they stood side by side, folding their belongings.

"Mmmm," Josephine said, "I love warm clothes when they've just come out of the dryer. And they smell so good!" She lifted a sweater to her face and rubbed her nose in it.

"I know just what you mean. I used to love helping my mother with the laundry in the winter just so I could get all warmed up." Josephine knew she wouldn't mind getting a little warmed up herself.

"...after they're dry?" Damn, he had said something, and she had missed it, dreaming.

"I'm sorry, what?" She smiled a bright, yet slightly mischevious (she hoped) smile.

"I was just wondering, if I could take you out for a drink after your clothes dry, Josephine." He was suddenly polite, and earnest, as if he really didn't want to mess up his invitation.

“Yes, Brett, I would love to.” Brett, that’s a good name- like the *Gone With the Wind* Brett, no, that was Rhett. But it still construed the same passion and manliness.

Suddenly she was struck with the realization—this was not just flirting in a laundromat, she needed his sperm! This guy could be the father of her child for the rest of its life (without him knowing, of course). She had a duty to check him out, to delve into his soul, and then get him to go home with her. The last part seemed easy compared with the “interrogation.” She guessed she would play it by ear. What if he had a girlfriend? No, he seemed pretty single to her. What if he had no job, no education, no money? Well, she’d see for herself. What if he had herpes, or AIDS? Well, you really can’t have a baby with a condom, can you? She decided she would ask him if the situation, ahem, arose. Her evening of simply doing her laundry had turned into a quest, a mission for her unborn child. And she was determined to prove his worth, over drinks, to this Rhett, uh, Brett.

Drinks at the local bar had been wonderful; they talked, laughed, and even danced some. He moved easily, like a cat, and he smelled like soap and a musky sort of aftershave. She found out a lot about him; he really was a simple, good man. He had a master’s degree and was now an architect, and he had never been married. He obviously liked her, and had sat very close to her all night. Every now and then he would touch her shoulder or her leg, and it felt so good to be wanted. “Yes,” she decided, “this is him. He’s the one.”

They went back to her place under the premise of making coffee, but it wasn’t coffee either of them wanted. She put on some music, something slow and rhythmic, and it wasn’t long before they were dancing again, and then kissing in her living room.

“Shall we...” he whispered, nuzzling her ear.

“Yes,” Josephine answered, not really caring what the question was. But he gave her the answer, all right, and all night in her bedroom, giving her the gift she so desperately wanted. She had said to him that she was on the pill after he had told her he had been tested, and she told him the same. As she lay there next to him as he slept, she realized she was going to have to lie again. She had ducked his queries of seeing her again, shyly smiling when he told her she was a very special lady. He just couldn’t believe they had been doing their laundry at the same place for two years and had never met. “Yeah,” she thought, “Junior would have been walking by now.” But still, as caring and warm as Brett had been, she still did not want a husband. She just wanted a child, that’s all. A child of her very own. She went over what to say to him, what she had prepared to say, and gently nudged him awake.

“Brett?”

“M-hmm? Still awake?”

"Brett, I have something I have to tell you."

"What?" He sat up in bed, looking adorable as his hair was all mussed on the top of his head.

Josephine took a deep breath. "I'm not going to be able to see you again."

"Why not? Jo, you're not married, are you?"

"No," Josephine said. "I'm joining a convent in less than a week."

"What?" Brett turned around fully to face her. "What are you talking about? You didn't say anything about being a nun—wait a minute! Nuns don't have sex!" Brett looked really confused.

"I know they don't. Brett, I want to thank you. This was my last time ever, and you made it so special for me." (Boy, had he ever.) "But I know it is my true calling from God and I felt you should know." Josephine said all of this calmly, as if explaining to a little child.

"You're ...you're going to be a nun. In less than a week? How long have you known this?" Brett seemed puzzled, but at least he was believing

"All my life. It's just recently I knew the time was right. And I'm really sorry I didn't tell you before, but I was afraid you might have treated me differently. I mean, I'm not there yet, am I?"

"No, you're not." Brett smiled. "So... if this is going to be your last time ever, I think we ought to do it right. It should be something to remember." He put his arms around her.

"Oh, you don't have to worry about that, it will," Josephine started to say, but Brett's lips were covering her mouth.

When she walked out of the doctor's office two months later, it was a gorgeous sunny day in June, the birds were singing, and she saw mothers with children everywhere. "I'm one of you!" she wanted to shout. "I'm going to be a mother!" She breezed down the sidewalk, seemingly on the tips of her shoes. She wanted to stop at each store window just to see her reflection, the picture of a pregnant woman smiling back at her. "Thank you, Brett," she thought, and smiled. She felt very good about the life she had chosen for her and her child, but in a small way, she wanted someone to be as happy as she was. The thought quickly passed, and she found her little car at the end of the curb. She was anxious to get home, to start dreaming of the life she had inside her.

Over the next few months she had went and bought a crib, a rocking chair, little stencils of children holding balloons for the nursery's walls, and she had relished making her old guest room into a tiny person's room. She hung the mobile over the bed; her mother had bought it for her. That had been incredibly awkward; telling her she was pregnant and had no intention of ever seeing the father again had not been her mother's cup of tea.

"He thinks you're in a convent?" Josephine's mother, Estelle, had shrieked into the phone, one day in early October.

“Yes, Mother, and that’s the way I want to keep it. I know this is hard for you and Daddy, but honestly, I’m really very happy.” Josephine hoped that her mother would be relieved to hear that, at least.

“But how will you make ends meet? How can you keep your job and still have a baby? It’s no easy load, I can tell you that from experience, dear.”

“I’m going to go half-time when I feel I can leave the child with a nanny. But until then, mother, I have a lot of savings—I’ve been working hard you know, and tuna fish and nylons don’t cost very much.” She was hoping to appease her mother with all the right answers, but deep down she knew she was just going to have to take it a day at a time.

“Yes, but hospital bills and diapers do add up. It’s not going to be easy bringing up a child on your own. You’ll let us know if we can help out, okay, Josie?”

“Yes, mom, I promise.” At least her mother had offered to help. That was a good sign. She really needed her mother now.

Josephine thought of the conversation as she hung the stars and moon mobile over the bed. It was kind of rough being alone, having no one with whom to share her anxieties now that the baby was due in a couple of months, in late January, her doctor had said. Even Cheryl was getting tired of the pros and cons of natural childbirth, and had no interest in picking out pint-size pajamas. She thought of Brett often, even passing by the Tenacre apartments once on an errand. She wouldn’t know what to say to him if he did see her, but she hoped he was doing well. Maybe she wanted to thank him, but she did her laundry at Big Al’s Wash now. She didn’t want to run the risk of him seeing her, fairly bounceable now, and all the questions that would come. She pushed the thought of Brett’s dark brown eyes out of her mind.

“December 20th. Only four more shopping days til Christmas,” Josephine said to herself as she looked at the paper with her mail. She patted her belly and said “Merry Christmas, baby.” She noticed the lone envelope mixed in with the announcements of “Half off ALL Christmas items,” and read her name, neatly written on the front. “Probably more advertisements,” she thought, and slit the top open without looking at the address on the back. She pulled out a cheerful picture of children frolicking by two snowmen, with a big red “Merry Christmas” banner at the top. She lifted the card open.

Dear Josephine,

I sent this card to your old address in case the people who moved in know where to send it, but I don’t even know if nuns can get mail. I hope convent life is treating you well, and it is all you wanted it to be. Business is going great, but I do get lonely when I have to do my laundry. I guess nuns don’t have to worry about mixing lights and darks (ha, ha). I just wanted to wish you a Merry Christmas and

tell you I was thinking about you. If you can, please write me. They sure are lucky to have you.

Fondly,

Brett L. Ducell

Josephine grabbed the envelope again. There it was, his address. He had written her. And he missed her! Her heart was pounding. "Oh my God. Baby, this is from your daddy!" She put the card in front of her stomach as if the baby could read it. "He wrote us! No! He wrote me." Josephine was hit with the revelation. Brett still thought she was a nun, not a woman ready to have his child in four weeks. If he knew, he never would have written. Josephine sighed. What was she doing? Was she sorry now? Sorry she had crossed him out of her life so neatly? She certainly wasn't regretting her decision to have a child, just having a child alone, especially when there was a great deal she had in common with Brett? Didn't he have a right to know there was a baby in this world with his name on it? Josephine felt more confused than ever. Why now, of all the times he could have written, why when just last night I wished I had someone to cuddle with in front of the fire and not have to change its diaper?

But she knew she couldn't write him back; she had lied to this man. Not only about being a nun, but the birth control and certainly not telling him the truth about her intentions was lying. She would never be able to deny that, her selfishness. She ripped up the card and threw the pieces into the wastebasket. She rubbed her tummy. "It's just you and me, kid," she thought, as she went to take a shower.

It was a snowy February morning, the tops of the trees bowed over under the weight of the snow that had fallen all week. Josephine was happily cleaning up, starting many jobs all at once and doing all of them at the same time: cleaning the windows, wiping the counters, soaking Mattie's bottles in the sink. It was wonderful. Motherhood was all she had expected it to be. Suddenly she had a purpose, something that needed her all the time; she was someone who answered a need. She was coming up to her smiling and wanting to touch so many people, strangers, a girl? "What's her name?" "Oh, look at those beautiful brown eyes! Her daddy must be very proud!" She would just smile and say "Thank you." It wasn't as if she had a lot of time to think about Brett now, with such a brand-new being in her life. She loved her so much, the little sounds she made, her crying and sleeping times. She just felt so lucky.

She heard Mattie and went into her room, lifting her up into her arms, gently. "Good morning, sweet one, are you ready for breakfast?" She went to the dresser to get a blanket to put around Mattie when she heard the doorbell. "Ooh, let's go see, Mattie!" Mattie cooed in her arms happily. She opened it wide, expectantly. She wouldn't have been more surprised if it had been the President standing there. It was

Brett. And he was smiling. And he had something behind his back...a gun? Oh God, please, no...

"You didn't write back."

"I..I..I'm sorry, I.."

"These are for you." He produced a bunch of flowers from behind his back. He was still smiling, and he was looking at Mattie with wonder. Then he turned back to Josephine.

"I'm not going to make you stand there and try to explain yourself and also this little girl here to me. I know. I know you didn't go to the convent, and I know that the little girl is mine, please, Josephine, what is her name?"

"Mattie." It came out like a whisper, and she was holding her daughter very tightly.

"And I know that Mattie is in all likelihood my child, and that I had to try to get in contact with you, even though you didn't want anything to do with me. I didn't think you had anything against me, really. I figured that it was something to do with being tired of being alone, and being discouraged of the men you knew. And I understood, Josephine! I don't blame you for not letting me be a part of Mattie's life—she is mine, isn't she, Jo?"

"Yes." Josephine was so dumbstruck she didn't know how to handle this.

"Yes. So!" Brett took a deep breath. "I figure, you never even gave me a chance, and you never know, right?"

"Right, but how did you know that I was still here?"

"I saw you at the supermarket early in December, but you didn't come. Boy, was I surprised!" Brett let out a whistle.

Josephine couldn't help but laugh a little. "And I had been so careful going to Big Al's Wash, instead!"

"So, what do you think? About giving me a chance? Or at least, please, let me hold her?" Brett had all but taken the child in his own arms.

"All right, why don't you come in out of the cold? I could fix you some coffee..." Josephine stopped.

Brett caught her hesitation. "Don't worry about it, I'd love some." He smiled. "Maybe I'll actually get to drink some this time," he offered. "Or perhaps we have some laundry to do?"

Josephine laughed as she closed the door to the winter outside. So here he was again, smiling, and holding her, no, their sweet daughter. It was wonderful, although quite a shock. She made light of the situation and nestled next to Brett and Mattie.

"Well, Brett, if you could stand to mix those colors, but I promise to not make it a *habit*."

Brett winced. "There's *nun* whom I would rather wash with."

And with that, they began to talk, a conversation of a newfound love, their daughter.

Carolyn Gregg

Interstate 480

Old enough to understand
NO TRESPASSING
and young enough
to pretend we couldn't
we slipped through a fence taller than my father
to gambol down the center of Interstate 480 at midday.
I couldn't imagine us apart, halves of a whole,
racing up and down endless fresh steamy tar,
space travelers on some barren moon, looking
for a place to plant our flag.
We believed we were the first to travel this asphalt prairie
Lewis and Clarked our way across it, fascinated
by things now not mysterious.
Poking, sneaking, stealing bits of roadway,
I knew your thoughts and you knew mine.
We don't keep secrets now, but then
when black bottomed sneakers were discovered,
when we were interrogated,
we never told.
I drive on that freeway now,
thinking of then,
and sometimes
I remember to look for our flag.

Melissa Gotsch

Sunday Afternoon Drives Section 47

Our dandelion dreams flew past on highway signs. Clay ground of North Carolina where rubies seem to be dropping off the sides of the mountains. Every sign sings about the fortune to be made by sifting the earth. One bucket of dirt one buck. We sat down sifting truckloads of clay searching for jewels, instant fortunes.

You bought a shit happens button at a greasy gas station with even a slimier bathroom. Condoms are worth four quarters, then there is the French Tickler, a plastic ring of genital warts that makes women scream. I bought one for you. The pine trees all lining the highway like a forage of soldiers.

You said we ought to stay in Charleston and we stayed until slushy winter, then I wanted to leave. All I was learning was southern racism where the war all started. You stared at me with that bright look, crazy-bug-eyed, hair wreathing your face. You were staying here in Charleston so I was staying in southern racism. You swung your legs sitting with the ocean behind you on the Charleston Monument, you looked like sculpture.

I took your picture over and over in the spring. I snapped the spirit right out of you. I developed them in an hour and left with you in pictures. I have every face and I just look at them. I left with what was left of us in four picture slides.

I hear they're making movies about the books I wrote about us in Charleston. I hear they will southern noose me if I come back. I'm famous without you, but I found the French Tickler last night and wanted to know if you wanted to flap your arms around me and ride on my motorcycle across the mountains speeding too quickly around curves.

Adam Ellis

LeMay

Rows of chairs made of thick plastic with a rough worn looking texture, dyed insanity orange and manufactured to fit the natural curve of the body, flow in a precise way from the top of the auditorium down to the front. Kidney-shaped tops hold stacks of bound thought, facts, and propaganda to one side. Seventeen of these in a row. Twenty-one rows. One-hundred-twelve students occupying the first eight rows. Me, towards the back of the middle. The floor of dark grey cement is measured off in sections of three feet then exactly cut six inches down forming another plane of three feet. Twenty-one times. One thousand one hundred and seventy-six silver legs of metal with small saucer feet are planted on their particular row that narrows in slightly with the hard-looking walls that angle themselves in and down focusing on the front. Two hundred and twenty four legs pressed hard or soft or tapping or slightly above or asleep or one on the knee with the other one down on the floor are seen through abundant but thin pillars. This conglomeration is focused on the front. Inanimate more than animate. Focus lands on a withered shape clad in polyester, wrinkly, windblown. Says desk, chair, floor, wall, consist of mostly empty space. Mole equals 10^2 point two times ten to the twenty third grams. Molecule (sweet smell) A combination of (dark brown hair past shoulders) atoms bonding (beautiful face, high cheeks, pretty smile) in a systematic pattern (breast nicely rounded under tight woven shirt sleeveless smooth delicate skin) to obtain scientific traits. Molecular weight (slender into jeans that hug her crossed thighs) Amount of grams in each molecular structure. Her hair I pull back and tenderly kiss her barren neck. Taste the salt. Gently lick her ear. Feel her face smooth in my hand. Embracing her body. Feeling hers against mine. Her jeans loosening. Mine tightening. Intertwining with her having four feet one body and two heads. Her beauty transporting me away to something not empty. Filling space. Inspiring space. Having my space inspired. Orbital inclination The (her leg lying across mine) angle between (mixed sweat) the orbital plane of a body (naked. Stargazing position) and some reference plane (Her. Panting.) Organic Relating to the branch of chemistry concerned with (we share a laugh) the carbon compounds of living creatures. Organism (Fuckin' class) An ordered living creature.

Peter Hite

Because

Isaac
all long legs,
young cream stomach,
kissed his bearded father,
lay back on the stone altar,
felt his father's cracked hands
wrapping his legs in twine,
saw the silver hairs hang down,
felt the thumbprint,
that spiral of oxygen, light, and time,
press down upon his forehead,
saw the fish spit a water salute,
the birds swoop low,
the mother of man kneel down again
in her garden,
heard the pecking of children at a golden gate,
saw his father's downturned eyes,
the blade raised high in the orange and red evening,
felt his tongue roll back,
his hands go numb, his soft,
limp, flesh give up,
heard his father's breath go in,
his own go out,

and then the voice,
like the swish of every hair,
a field of wheat whistling with crickets,
all strings and woods, no horns,
the chatter of a million baby's gums,
the flutter of a thousand women's lashes,
the shuffle of all men's feet,
rushed through his ears,
beat on his drum,
and he knew.

Karin Wraley

7 a.m. Easter Sunday

It is seven a.m., Easter Sunday.

Christ has officially risen, the birds are bleeding
beautiful harmonious tones of spring, the gaseous ball of molten fire
has cesarean-sected the day and began to spill
light upon our nervous systems,
the perpetual sound of energy magnifies, rumbles,
rubber licks concrete at high velocities,
jets, trains and any other form of mass transit awake
the animals, who in turn wake the humans,
shadows are gaining more character and color,
the sky is spitting or something's pissing on this section of the globe,
the air is streamwater fresh and if
I could just fast-forward time two months and be able to touch you
as your hair wooed my face
and this whole process repeats...
one of the days of my blinking life would complete itself.

Kip Tobin

Surreally

You enter,
and begin nakeding yourself,
and nuding my thoughts.

I sift through all irrelevancies
and become you in focus.

You proceed to pick that precise angle
that smashes my privacy onto your body.

Your obliteration of me
welcomes my want. My body is ruptured—
not in pain, but by the immediacy of
release from this rhythmic euphoria.

I seal my eyes air-locked and
attempt to visualize roadkill so as to
glide past this tidal ravishment and
soothen my quivering legs. Unlocking
my eyes, you reappear in revelation.

You are God,
except you exist,
in the nerves at the toes of my fingertips.

Realizing this, I explode into a hovering cloud
of smoke over the bed, that mixes with your burning
cigarette, re-entering your mouth
with every inhale—wholing my existence
with the experience of you.

Kip Tobin

Sweet Bruises

When we stood
together on the pier
the tight familiar fear
held us precariously
on its fingertips
like an angel, drunk.

Before the mask of Morpheus
shadows our faces
He will show us the dreams
crackling underneath
my leather boots.

Late at night I fit him
snug, a thimble
warm and familiar
my body his blanket
he signs his silken signature in me
certain it will not change.

An hour after he leaves my magic in his pocket
I am left with sweet bruises
variegated blending with
the moon rising on my skin.

Carolyn Gregg

release

sometimes, a fever
a red-hot itch down low
eats me alive
sometimes, a spark of your soul
gets stuck in my mind
and I pull it down,
visualize where I feel you best
 (you know the spot where
 you make me sweat)
sometimes, I trap you
fluid, fizzing between my teeth
and the sweet and salty thought
of your skin
satisfying
my skin
makes me slip and slide
into love with you

Lisa Davis

neverland

I dream
you dream
about me
a ghost of me
grips you—a far away
single, liquid-silver thought
free-floats like never-land
in your mind

you turn and sigh
between breaths
and twisted sheets
an airy secret
an imagined image
of me wisps like fog
forgotten and remembered
in fragments
lingering, lucid, intangible
buzzing your brain

I dream
you dream
(sweet dreams)
about me

Lisa Davis

Creating Literature

I peer out the window at the night bold with the bravado of darkness trimming the world in a light coat of blackness. The moon gently rises overhead and the clouds cling to it like babies mouthing for a breast. I lie on my back, with Dagny's head gently nested around the top of my arm and shoulder. After sex, she always falls asleep first; I lie in conscious delirium wondering about the way love is with us.

My mind shadow boxes away all the corners of the room and I fear nothing but silence. My eyes never stay closed long enough to enter into dreams. It's probably the high tension and boiler room pressure I've got myself wired on. Insomnia, a disease, it grows swelling one's existence into a daily routine of action with no actual action. I feel as death would be a welcome constant of darkness with no worry of finding sleep for it would be prevalent. I've worked myself into a paralysis of typing out words and creating a new style of writing. It controls me.

Dagny has fallen into the abyss of sleep and her head has slipped out of the nook of my underarm. I gently ease my arm out from underneath her and rise. The oak floor perches on the wax that has been driven into its hide, chilling my feet. I walk over to the computer and flick on the module, staring at a blue screen, wondering how much more I can pour into words. My eyes open and close blinking sandpaper eyelids over my vision and it reminds me of all-night driving across West Virginia on my way home years ago. I quickly begin typing.

The brown mountains lie like sleeping dogs, double humped on the ground and swirl with crooked roads. Jumble faced West Virginians muddle around in circles talking about the state fair and how much fatter the pigs are going to be this year. The farmer's index pokes through the roof of possibilities and it seems as though the entire country is going bankrupt due to the lack of basic morality. The green pickup trucks all rust away. The city center has closed except for the liquor palace and Art's Convenient. The fireworks show won't be as big this year because the plum faced mayor got caught western style robbing the bank and it seems no one can come up with the cash that he stole. The posse chased him in Caprice Classics and he swore up and down he didn't do it before twelve gauging himself right through the head. Everyone kerchief cried at his funeral except me, I just thought about entering the race for mayor with all my greenbacks and greenbucks.

I stroke a cigarette between my lips and light the tip with a swift inhale of the lighter flame on the end. Smoke dumps itself swirling the screen into a cloud of blue. I long to create with the English language but feel bound by the mighty history of the language. I flip the screen back off and stumble to the refrigerator, grabbing an apple. I turn and jerk the coffee pot off the twenty-four-hour burner and dump myself a cup. I sit nervously chomping

the apple, then inhaling. I let the smoke linger with the apple taste, a swarth that stains one's impression of what an apple tastes like smoked. I wash it down with a slug of hot coffee, my mouth callused to the temperature due to the number of cups swallowed in the past six months. For six months I've pondered the dilemma of creation and excavation. I've realized that creating a new piece of writing that is original is noble. Unfortunately writers excavate writing by bringing up the old and just rewriting it into the new. I want creation.

Dagny awakes at seven to the town bell tower gonging in the morning sunlight. The sun creeps through the window and I stare out from our third-floor window to the buildings below. The snow of this New Hampshire morning reflects orange with the first light of day. The buildings all look brick-oven baked to perfection.

"Josiah, do you know how deflating it is to wake up alone every morning? To roll over in bed expecting the warmth of flesh and being greeted by iced sheets? You've got to start sleeping or you'll never finish the portfolio." Dagny's voice careens into sympathy as she remembers that insomnia is a disease. A disease that she had contracted and had due to painting, but lately she had no problem falling into the well of sleep.

"City Lights is expecting something big even monumental this time. I mean they took the first portfolio and it held the potential for being creatively a new presence." I have repeated this statement over to Dagny and myself, each time the pressure becoming an intense bell-bar weight. "I mean, the publisher said this could be the next revolution, the next step, the Beats and then what ever this is."

"What is it, Josiah? I used to be your favorite critic. Now you shudder when I ask to read what you're writing," Dagny scoops two spoonfuls of sugar and then milks the coffee into a morning cream, instead of a coffee.

"It's visualist," I reply. I don't want to explain to her what I am doing with this writing or what I am trying to do with writing. Criticism at this point would only impede the creative process. "I've got to start working," I rise gently placing a kiss on Dagny's forehead.

I meander back into the bedroom where my desk sits cornered within the wisps of papered notes scribbled when away on a walk or jerkily written while driving one-eyed. I pick up the letter from City Light Books that inspires me to write more every day.

Dear Mr. Josiah Roark,

We here at City Light Books were very impressed with your potential to create a new type of writing. It was presumptuous of you to call yourself the next Jack Kerouac. Your claims of being the next great creator, however, seem to warrant merit; therefore we are enclosing this check for six thousand dollars to be cashed. We expect your evolution to continue in your next submission and will negotiate contract terms at that time. etc...

This project teased my intellect and I constantly bang on the typewriter, creating a portfolio I call Appalachia. I want to write a visual perspective of every state in the Appalachia area. I was born in Appalachia and raised within the mysticism of that part of the country. Something kettle stirs the insides of Appalachian peoples and locating their mysticism reveals an old book of mountain magic. Before I can visually reproduce the mood of a state I must in some way touch a creative base that triggers the gun of my mind into firing images. The entire premise behind visualist writings is an onslaught of mental pictures that create a general picture of atmosphere for the reader. My mind paints things on my mind and I try to convey the mind-maddening pictures into words that evoke a mental stimulus for word art. The blood red dirt on Dagny's boots strokes my mind into North Carolina.

The red clay births men who in old age creak to each other on wooden-slatted porches about mighty bear hunts. Coons cover the trees all holing up in rotting ancients called birches and oaks. Women tally-talk to each other across the full clotheslines meeting someone else's property, a fence of clothes. Edith on Burr Mountain has the shingles and has been bedded with the disease of lung smoke for three months. Trout casseroles have filled her belly and the whole house smells like a fish bucket on a hot afternoon with three fish and no water. Men legged in rubber stand along the banks lined with rocks, swinging fake flies at the wise old trouts that swim dirty puddling themselves on the bottom. The blue mountains wrinkled with roads and trailers and white churches filled with people still believing in Jesus. Healed men walking from the lame fill the pews. Men leave their brown chew wads outside and women put on rose cheeks when going to meet God each Sunday.

The continual bliss of making something new surges adrenaline through my blood and the capillaries in my fingertips call to the mighty mischief of doing everything the creative way. I lean back in the rocking-wooden desk chair that I found discarded over on Barton Street. The slats in the back cracked with the weight of the fat-three-piece suited businessman that sat in it before me. These images flood my brain now and stopping this mode of thinking would be stopping the surge that this writing floods from.

This the fifth day of writing with no passage of dreams that open the imagination to thought. I feel the overbearance of stress and everything in my body seems jangled. I rise quickly stealing to the bathroom. The urge to release my bowels has struck me. I sit on the porcelain pool that flushes everything away. The bathroom Dagny decorated in the ever-popular mauve and forest green. The flowered painting on the wall seems to be growing and I feel the tension of madness flowing out of my body temporarily into the toilet with the bowel. I rise after the meticulous process of wiping myself, the continual strokes of toilet paper one of the tasks that life causes man to repeat like a skipping record. I stiffly walk back to the computer and my hands shake for a cigarette, a poison addiction. The soft pack smashed like a squirrel three times underneath a tire. The pack small town street at four in the morning

empty, I shovel my arms through my beiged overcoat and slam through the door and down the stairs to the street below.

Crunching down the street, on top of a thin layer of the large ice rink the whole town has become this winter, past bundled women and men who all possess a knowledge and life that lies creatively within my mind. I create an existence for everyone I meet in passing. I brisken my walk, time, time, time to finish. I jingle through the door of the Dairy Mart. Dagny stands behind the counter. Her golden hair gleams from the wall of sunlight pouring through the advertisement windows. Her hands too delicate to be punching out the ninety-nine cent purchase of a two liter of carbonation. Her hazel eyes rise to meet my gaze. Her eyes, a pathetic antique of the brilliance that shined through her. Dagny's created: manipulating the canvas into a three-dimensional screen with the preciseness of Michelangelo. She painted from the rise of the sun until the crack of the next morning. She created artwork that was reality, masterpieces door opened upon her canvas. She used to carry her artwork beneath her arm proud like an army general, her head high and mighty. She hadn't painted in two months. After being old-ugly-whore rejected by every art museum in New Hampshire and the Boston metropolis area she had stopped painting suddenly. Her entire existence fractured by rejection. She is no longer a creator, just one of the collective drones that keep the world moving in perpetual circles. Philosophically we no longer relate, I am a creator and she has lost the inner glow of creation and I spend the seconds that I'm not writing wondering if she will ever return to my world.

"Hello, Josiah, welcome to Dairy Mart. My name is Dagny is there anything I can help you find today?" she laughs out the acknowledgment Mr. Dockery, her boss, had told her to use at all times.

I grimace in response and say, "Yea, a carton of Marlboro Mediums."

"That's sixteen dollars even," she winks at me and passes me the carton without ringing them up. I never pay for cigarettes, she just says a price to entertain anyone that might be eavesdropping their ears in the store. "Should I make dinner tonight or are you going to be typing all night?"

"I'll be typing, I've only got two more states to go."

"Which ones?" she asks, attempting to enter into my creative process.

"Kentucky and Tennessee."

"Do you know what you're going to write about each state?" she asks hopefully.

"Yes," I turn quickly away and march towards the door.

"See you tonight," she slings the words at me like pebbles at Goliath.

"Yea."

I exit the store and slam the cartoon on the newspaper machine, packing all the smokes at one time. I slam them all at once because it's more efficient than knocking one at a time. I meander back through town and stop in the town center. A green coppered statue guards the city center, a British bastard who slayed Indians in the name of Christ. I sit myself on a bench and tear open a pack of the cigarettes. I lean back inhaling the sharp, cold air and wheeze the first drag off of a cigarette. Marlboro's taste like America, the

cigarette smokes me to Kentucky. I finger my pocket for a pen and the pad of paper that I arrange in my coat for stops of sudden inspiration. Writing in the center of the city, a creative rest stop.

Banjoes bluegrass doodle through the air flying sky high over the entire state. Swinging madly over rows and rows of tobacco standing like an army raised to carry the entire world to addiction. Women all sit up late at night knitting bad light in order to impress relatives given homemade baby clothes every winter. Men all stand in the city center auctioning their souls, the mighty tobacco leaf for a little more each year. Fat politicians travel in buses from city to city promising no new cigarette taxes. Shakers still fill the state, hand weaving rocking chairs for pruned old people that sit drinking the mint that they grow in their back yards in tea. The whole state glows at night because the entire state leaves their porch lights on waiting for company that never comes. Tobacco stains the whole state in yellow with brown edges like an old document stating freedoms for everyone.

I stumble to my feet looking like a clown, my nose reddened with cold and my feet slippery with ice, dancing like a circus clown painted with a white face. I gather my personage and walk home, enter my words into the hard blasted memory of the computer bank where deposits collect dust and no interest. I crumple my hands feeling the drive to finish, pushing the accelerator of my mind to be done. I cannot continue through this fog of unconsciousness to the material world. My mind hammers my body into finishing this like driving a nail to head.

After finishing typing the Kentucky section, I swallow through three cups of coffee in quick succession like Alabama leaving the union over slaves. God, the parade of states won't stop. It's like a Miss America pageant being televised in my brain. Each state a lovely bosomed woman wanting to be plucked. Tennessee comes quickly. My brain beating my fingers to action over the excitement of being finished, creator with chaotic disorder.

I enter the apartment and tear through photo albums and pull a picture of my gene parents from the section. My mother, a woman, to be pitied for her naivety, and my father, to be punched for his wisdom that lies within the world of drones. His arms combination locked around my mother overlooking Kingston, Tennessee. Both of them look alive, in contrast to the old trees they are now rooted in the reality of society, both holding the soil of society together.

Tennessee, the home of the great depression medicine cabinet where Roosevelt tried to make everything better by throwing the band aid of volunteers on the state. Dams built in concrete displays; building roads through mountains that weren't to be moved by nature. Music filling towns men all making sounds of making something new the wonderful creation of music towns built in homage to sound. The blue mountains bellowing with fog. Bears all furry sorting the trash every Tuesday night before trash days

searching for throw aways to eat. Winters of light snows where everyone in the state gets a cabin fever of hundred and twenty three and the mighty arrival of spring swinging the peoples into melody making music. The way their mouths filled with an accent that reeks of two much red wine causing an inborn speech impediment.

The climatic joy of a projects finish doesn't throb my body like a mad orgasm and I realize the project unravels before me like a ball of tightly wrapped yarn. Where I thought I was reaching the end I have found the task has just begun. The maddening realization that I can't be finished until the urge to drive my fingers forward is done. My mind aches at the task ahead as my fingers relish it like breast touching in the seventh grade. Rereading the letter from City Light books only ten days postmarked. I scan the Appalachia piece and realize the task must represent the entire nation, touching each part of the lady who is America. She's dressed in a velvet maroon dress with pale skin and long chestnut hair falling around her breasts. Quickly I stamp my fingers across the typewriter.

To Whom it May Concern,

I have enclosed the first part of my visualist attempt to portray America. I will be arriving in San Francisco with a completed manuscript on all forty eight continental states. I will be visiting each state and will be unable to be reached. Thank you for your patience.

Sincerely,

Josiah H. Roark

I envelope the Appalachia piece and scurry to the mailbox like an old man chasing after a Bingo prize. I dash back up to the apartment and begin to lose myself within the routes and passages of an atlas bought too many years ago to be effective; roads are opened and closed like a revolving hotel door. I marker a route that touches each state and stumble into the bedroom throwing clothes, and personals into a suitcase. I pack my life into four pieces of baggage that have no matches and all of the tags speak of different addresses had in the past.

I humpback all of the bags downstairs with an old manual typewriter and begin gypsy packing the old worn Volvo station wagon. Dagny comes dragging down the street like a lost cat eyeing me in lost confusion.

"What's going on, Josiah? Are you possessed? Wait, are you leaving me?" questions spout out her like water out of drinking fountain, filling my brain with responses.

"You..already left me, two months ago, but if you want to come back go upstairs and pack, and we'll leave together," I answer sharply, stabbing her tender wound. "I'm going to creatively touch each state."

I press the accelerator, like an old woman, spinning the tires on the light patches of ice that quiltwork cover the backdoor-two-lane highway. The night has fallen on this bitter cold evening and the only light in the road is my headlights and the glow of my interior light. Dagny balances her palette in her left hand, trying to create in paint where we're leaving. Destiny drives the vehicle in search of creation, living in the truest sense.

Adam Ellis

1995 Quiz and Quill Contest Winners

Poetry

- First Place "On The Rocks" by Carolyn Gregg
 Second Place "release" by Lisa Joy Davis
 Third Place "Courtroom Chalks: 1961 Justice in Mississippi" by Adam Ellis

Roy Burkhart Religious Poetry Contest

- First Place "Being" by Karin Wraley
 Second Place "Because" by Karin Wraley

Short Story

- First Place "You Know, Really Talking" by Carolyn Gregg
 Second Place "Big Brenda Does Las Vegas" by Katrina Seymour
 Third Place "Quarters for Laundry" by Katrina Seymour
 Third Place "The Lying Nun" by Carolyn Gregg

Personal Essay

- First Place "Me, My Job and My Manager's Anus" by Kip Tobin
 Second Place "Vital Pretensions" by Kevin Brown
 Third Place "Apple Orchard" by Adam Ellis

Louise Gleim Williams Newswriting Contest

- First Place Stories by Jennifer Funk
 Second Place Stories by Kandee Francis
 Third Place Stories by Heidi Adams

Judges

Poetry and Roy Burkhart Religious Poetry contests

Robert Pringle writes poetry and has been published in various literary magazines.

Short Story Contest

Candyce Barnes has published stories in *The Southern Review*, *Story*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Ohio Journal* and *High Plains Literary Review*.

Candy was a participant in last year's Otterbein Writers Festival.

Personal Essay Contest

Jeff Gundy, who teaches at Bluffton College in northwestern Ohio, has published several volumes of poetry, including *Inquiries* (Bottom Dog Press) and *Flatlands* (Cleveland State University Press). Indiana University Press will publish *A Community of Memory: In Search of George and Clara*, a memoir about his Mennonite grandparents. Jeff Gundy is a participant in this year's Otterbein Writers Festival.

Louise Gleim Williams Newswriting Contest

Sarah Bacha is a professional journalist and freelance writer with eleven years of daily newspaper experience. Most recently, she has spent eight years as a business journalist at the *Columbus Dispatch*. She also teaches journalism at Otterbein part-time.

Contributors Page

Kevin Brown is a student at Otterbein.

Aaron Carter is a senior theatre major who says, "My toes are very large and in need of sustenance."

Lisa Davis is a sophomore English major from Canfield, Ohio. She would like to thank her mother, for getting her interested in writing, and Andrew for being her inspiration and support.

Adam Ellis is a junior English major. Going for the profound, he says, "Listen to the sky, it will lead you on a journey."

Alyce Frankenhoff is a freshman English major.

Jason Green, a junior English major, says, "If you look at the ground, you'll find mud."

Carolyn Gregg, a senior English major, will be teaching ballroom dancing after she graduates. Quoting Red Smith, she says, "Writing is easy...you just sit down and open a vein."

Melissa Gotsch is a senior visual arts major.

Peter Hite, a senior English major, quotes Bob Dylan, "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows."

Jim Hunter, is a junior visual arts major who does mostly graphic design and illustration, and has an early case of senioritis.

Cheri Howman, a junior English major, thinks poetry is the great wide open.

Chuck Salmons, a junior English/philosophy major, says, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks...because he knows them all."

Katrina Seymour, a senior English major, says, "You can either lead a bitter life, or a better life."

Contributors, continued

Heather Spessard, a senior visual arts major, shouts at the top of her lungs, "I MADE IT!"

Kip Tobin, a senior English major, says, "I think I think too much—it drives me to the brink of clinical insanity sometimes. I hope to become more like Forrest Gump after I graduate..."

Karin Wraley is a senior English major.

Special thanks go to:

Dr. Jim Bailey,
Dr. Wayne Rittenhouse,
Dr. Jim Gorman,
Jim Hunter (for the incredible cover art), and
Aaron Thompson (for saving us once again!)

Comprehension

Heather Spearhead a main character in the story. She is a young girl who is very smart and is always looking for new adventures. She is the one who starts the story by finding a map that leads to a hidden treasure. She is very brave and is not afraid to go on a journey that is full of danger. She is also very kind and helps her friends when they are in trouble. She is the one who saves the day many times over. She is a true hero and is loved by everyone who knows her.

The map that she finds is very old and is made of parchment. It is very detailed and shows a path that leads to a hidden treasure. She is very excited and starts to pack her things. She is very careful and makes sure that she has everything she needs. She is also very smart and knows exactly what to do. She is the one who leads the way and is always looking out for her friends. She is a true leader and is loved by everyone who follows her.

As they travel, they find many interesting things. They see a large forest and a small village. They also see a river and a mountain. They are very curious and want to know more about the world around them. They are also very brave and are not afraid to go where they have never been before. They are also very kind and help the people in the village. They are also very smart and know exactly what to do. They are the ones who save the day many times over. They are true heroes and are loved by everyone who knows them.

Finally, they reach the hidden treasure. It is a large chest full of gold and silver. They are very excited and take the treasure home. They are also very smart and know exactly what to do with the treasure. They are also very kind and share the treasure with the people in the village. They are also very brave and are not afraid to go where they have never been before. They are also very smart and know exactly what to do. They are the ones who save the day many times over. They are true heroes and are loved by everyone who knows them.



