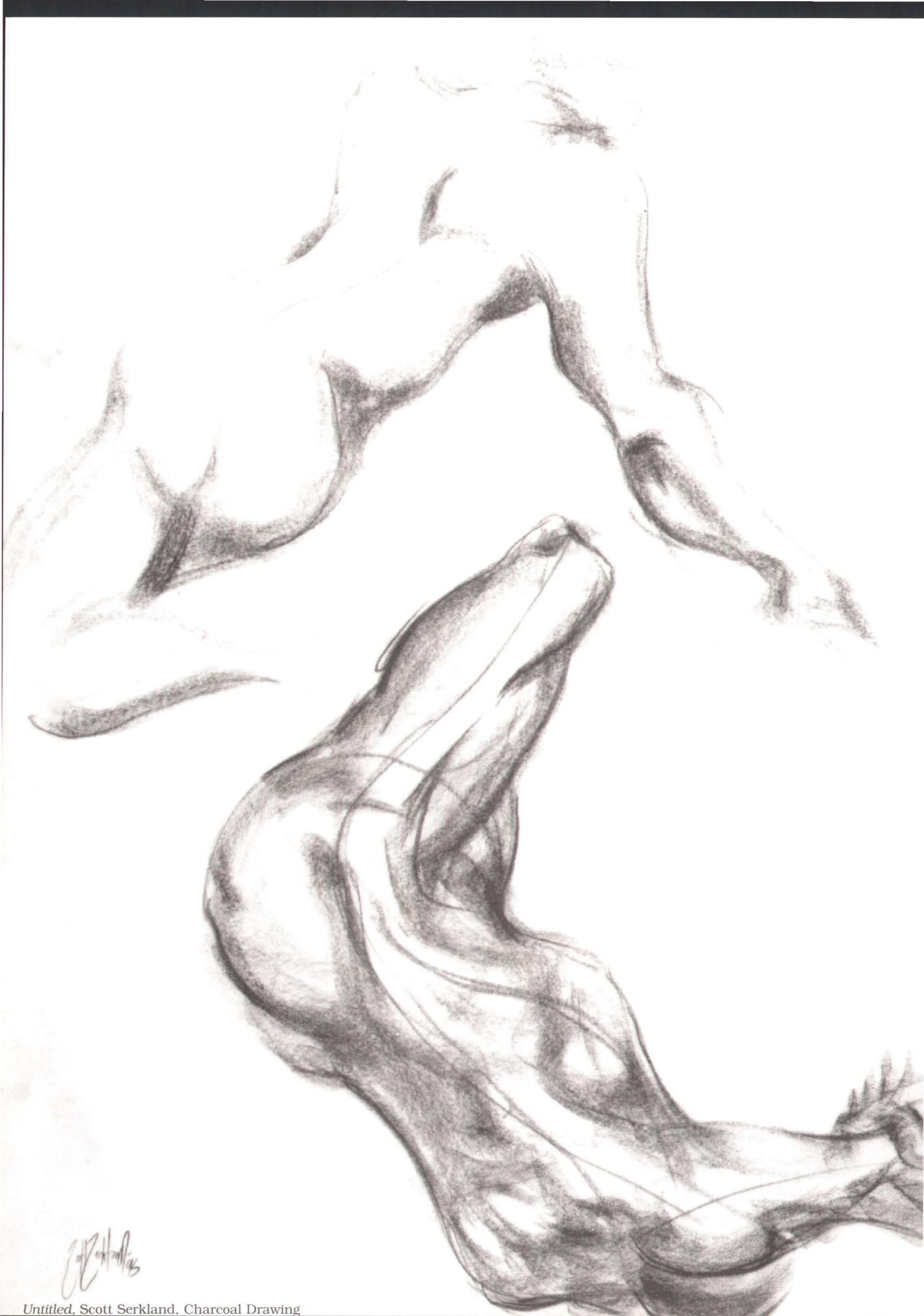


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## Traveler





Untitled, Scott Serkland, Charcoal Drawing

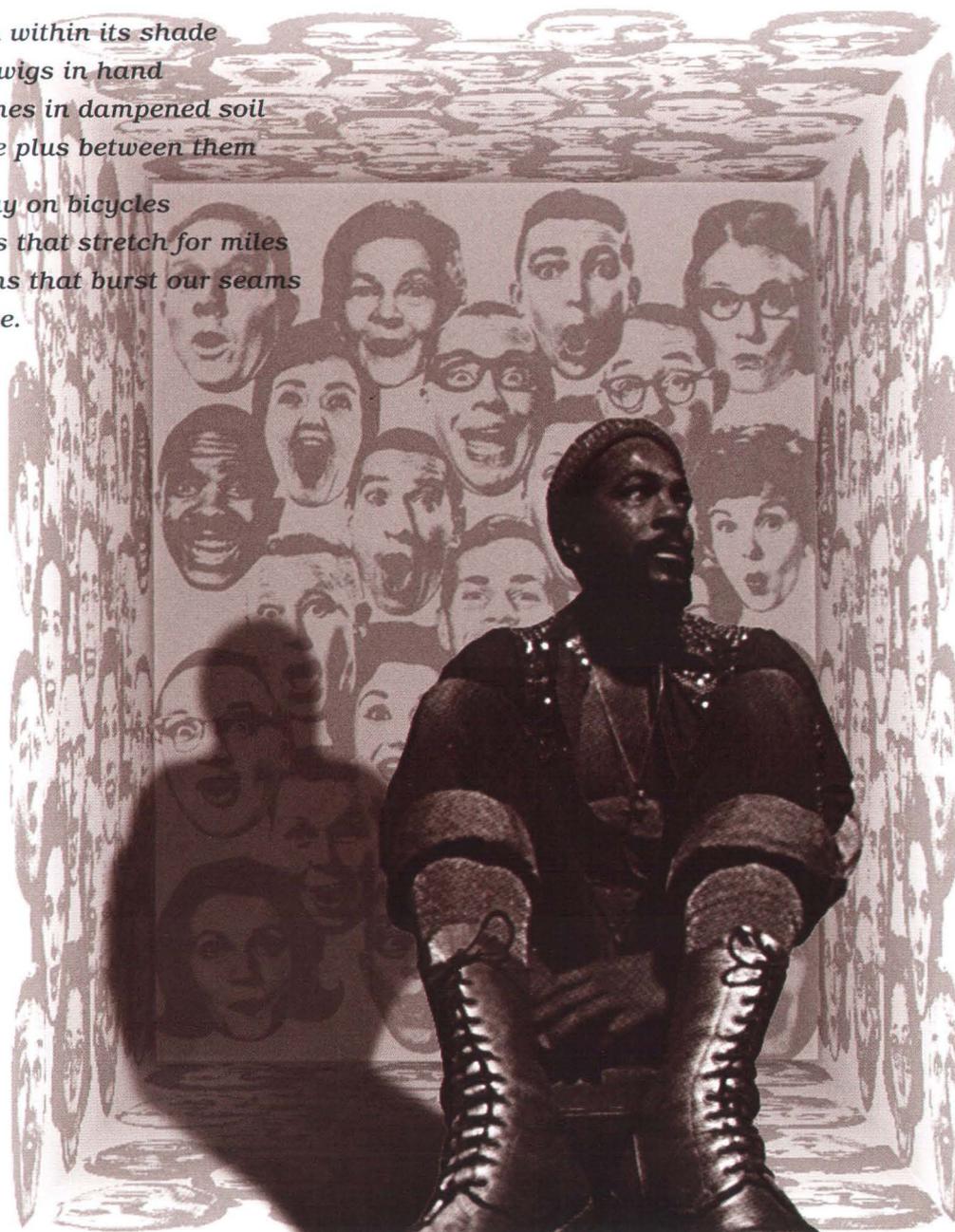
## bicycle

*John R. Bruggner*

*let's meet one day on bicycles  
the iron steeds of innocence  
meet me before dinner, as the sun goes down  
by some familiar tree, in our small town*

*let's settle down within its shade  
with scattered twigs in hand  
scratch our names in dampened soil  
and blush at the plus between them*

*let's part one day on bicycles  
with little smiles that stretch for miles  
with little dreams that burst our seams  
in little love.*



*Marvin, Kelly Clement, Third Place – Computer Art*

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## Ornaments Hung From The Heart

Melinda Davis

“You have such beautiful, long piano fingers; you could play the piano.”

“Grandma, I think I need lessons first.”

“Your hands were made to play a piano. Just look at those long piano fingers; you could really play the piano.”

“Grandma, I’m tone deaf and my piano teacher attempted suicide after my last lesson.”

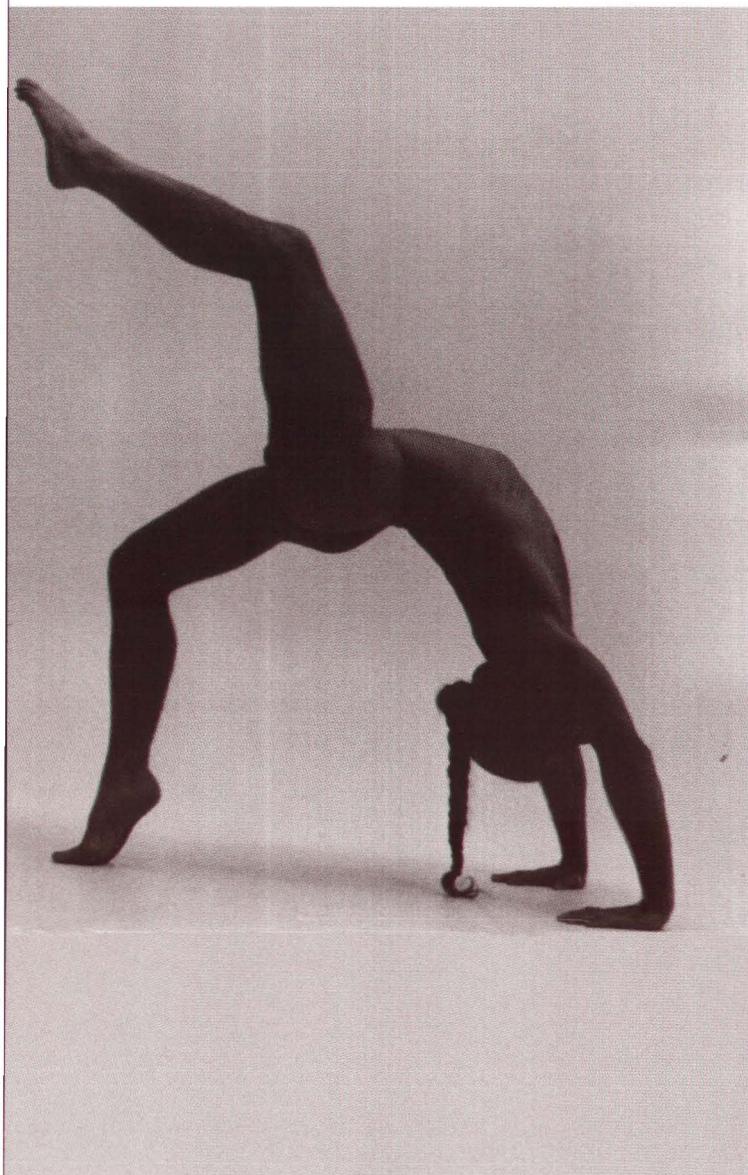
“Those fingers, long and flowing, I can just see them tickling the ivories. You know, if you really wanted to, you could play the piano.”—

In all things, despite evidence to the contrary, my grandmother continually affirmed my potential. While my parents worked, my grandmother watched me from the time I was nine months old, until I was in the sixth grade. In the time we spent together, we shared many things, including abstract tangibles and tales of wisdom.

“Abstract tangibles” sounds like an error. Oh, she meant “abstract intangibles.” I used this oxymoron on purpose, to express how my grandmother was able to expose me to feelings and emotions which one can’t fully know unless experienced first hand. Somehow, she was able to “hold” these abstracts and allow me to touch them, to know their textures, sizes and shapes, so I could always recognize them wherever I was. I was like a bare tree, let’s say evergreen (not my favorite tree, but it works with the metaphor). She came by and carefully added beautifully detailed ornaments, making me,



*Locket of Mystery*, Nina M. Rogers, First Place – Photography



Untitled, Shannon Reynolds, Photograph

the tree, unique. Yet, she left room for others to add a string of lights here and there, maybe some popcorn strings along with the lights and then a few strings of pearls in between the popcorn and lights. It sounds like many strings are attached, but hey, we are rather complex beings. Back to Grandma's abstract tangibles. The biggest ornament she added

was love. Yes, she bought me the gifts that my parents refused to. Yes, she gave me money to "get a little something" for myself and, yes, she always was able to produce candy out of thin air. But these are signs of affection most grandparents are known for. My grandmother did more. She let me sleep with her whenever I wanted which was just about every night because I was terrified of the dark. (I saw Darth Vader's hands floating around trying to get me at night. Four years old was a scary time, okay!) Now, I didn't just lie there all straight and quiet. I always had icy cold feet, and, of course, I wasn't tired. So, she would hold my feet and then tell me stories until I fell asleep. She taught me love and compassion through her actions toward me. I have often been told that I'm too nice to people because I feel sorry for almost anybody and I do too much for people who don't truly appreciate

it. I just ignore these comments and think about Darth Vader's hands, falling asleep to fairy tales and my warm feet.

Another ornament she hung on me is humor. Whether she knew it or not, she was very funny. Say we were just sitting around the house, she would just begin reciting poems and rhythms she knew. These poems

were not your regular Jack and Jill stuff. One of her favorite works to recite was about a goat that ate his owner's red shirts and, as a consequence, is tied to a railroad track. Luckily, as the train nears, the goat "coughs up those shirts and flags down the train." At least that was the jist of it. As if the poems she recalled weren't funny enough, as she got older, she forgot parts as she went, so she'd make up something to fill in. For example, sometimes the usual goat became a mad dog or the shirts were unconsciously transformed into red overalls. From these tales, I learned that through words you can bring people happiness. Their laughter becomes a compliment, a way of thanking you for making them feel good.

Another major bangle she added was the realization that there is more to life than working or going to school. Grandma was not lazy; however, she knew that everyone must "stop and smell the roses." It's a cliché but a good example of her philosophy at work. For example, when I was in the second grade, I had numerous substitute teachers. I guess I became worried about my regular teacher because I started to hate the substitutes. They scared me. I would get physically sick to my stomach and cry when I saw an unfamiliar face calling roll. Well, Grandma couldn't have that, so she would let me come home. She would take me from school and we would go out to lunch, usually Dairy Queen for the "Full Meal Deal": hamburger, fries, and ice cream. (Thank goodness I quit fearing my substitutes soon after second grade, or I would have needed liposuction by the time I was twelve.) We would eat and then spend the day shopping, visiting the library, or going to the park. I'm not absent from school

much any more, but I still treat myself to a day out with a friend every now and again, just to make sure I haven't forgotten to "stop and smell the roses."

Other influences I mentioned are the "Tales of Wisdom." These are homespun survival skills, little rules of thumb, which my grandmother passed on to me. Like a Christmas angel placed on top of the tree, these tales complete Grandma's embellishment of me.

The first skill you must know is how to take care of yourself or as Grandma put it, "If anybody ever gives you any trouble, you tell them they're nothing but chicken s#@t." Now, if this happens while you're at school and you're in trouble for passing this pearl of wisdom along to that little creep Biff, well then, you have the principal call Grandma and she'll "explain" it to him. While I have never had to exercise this phrase, I've often thought it as I've stood my ground. To this day I haven't had any trouble asserting myself when others start to "give me trouble."

Another wonderful saying of Grandma's was, "Your little butt is cuter than most kids' faces." I still think about this saying, wondering what in the world made her connect my butt with other little kids' faces. I never really took this observation to heart, but what an ego boost to know she loved me so much.

The last tale of wisdom deals with medicine, doctors. In her opinion, they were unnecessary. To Grandma, there were only three items in existence that anyone needed in a medicine cabinet: Camphophenique, Kleenexes, and suppositories. Camphophenique is an antiseptic like Bactine, only it smells

ten times worse. To Grandma, Camphophenique was Holy Water. If you had a pinprick, cut, collapsed organ, or flatline reading, you got Camphophenique. The tissues took care of any bodily fluids you needed removed either from wounds or from colds and allergies (which would be treated with Camphophenique). On the bottom of the list came the last resort, suppositories. They served as a back up system for the Camphophenique.

"What, you're still not feeling well? Hum, have your bowels moved today? You know, that may be the problem." Those are the exact words she would use time and time again. The word "bowels" scared me when I was little because I didn't exactly know what they were, yet I knew if they didn't move I was in trouble. It didn't take me long to learn that when she asked about my bowels, I'd tell her they were moving around like Mexican jumping beans.

The funny thing about this "tale of wisdom" is that my self-concept was influenced by all this. I don't trust doctors much; I have a bottle of Camphophenique in my medicine cabinet, Kleenex in my bedroom, living room and car, and although I have ditched the suppositories, I do keep a couple of prunes around just to shake up the old bowels. But more importantly, I see within myself a healing force. I know I'm not a doctor, but I learned that many wounds don't need medical attention as much as they just plain need attention.

My grandmother decorated "my tree" and filled my head with wisdom. (I guess the metaphors run wild there.) She passed away two years ago. She broke her



*Long Afternoons*, Tone Carmosino, Third Place – Photography

ankle and there were complications. I miss her immensely, but I feel privileged to have experienced such a special relationship. She had other grandchildren, but they lived out of state. I had her to myself for many years before another grandchild came along. Sometimes I feel selfish because of this exclusive relationship. Yet, if she hadn't been there when I was little, I would have gone to daycare or with someone I didn't know. What would I be like? I know I would be nothing like I am. I have a lot of my grandma's personality in me. When I look at it like that, I don't feel selfish any more. I feel blessed.



*Firebug*, Cheryl Traughber, Special Award – Illustration

## A Box of Frogs

R. A. Sam Stever

Tommy was a boy who lived on my street. He was an average nine year old. During the winter he waited for the school bus on the corner in front of my house. In summer, he played ball in the park down the street. Sometimes he would run by my house, hands cupped out in front of him, some wild creature trapped within. On days when he passed more leisurely, I would call out, "Hey, Tommy!"

"Hey, Sam!" he would yell with a wave. I seldom talked to him more than that.

One thing that Tommy did I often wondered about. On some days, he would carry a large, brown shoe box as he passed my house. He always had a determined look on his face on those days. I pondered what was in that box. Dead bugs was an obvious choice or maybe baseball cards. Even a butterfly collection would fill the bill.

One day I met Tommy's mother at the grocery store and asked her about the box.

"Oh, that's his frog box," she laughed. "He loves frogs. I guess that's what he carts them around in. I told him that he shouldn't keep them in an old box like that, but you know how boys are." We both laughed, and I assured her that I was a boy not too long ago.

A few weeks later, early on a Saturday morning, I saw Tommy sitting in front of my house. He was

waiting for the bus. By his side sat the box.

"How ya doing, Tommy?" I called as I crossed the yard.

"Fine," he replied.

"You going frog hunting today?"

"Mmm, hmm," he nodded his head.

"Where do you do your hunting?"

"Down at the library," he said in a matter-of-fact tone.

"At the library?" I laughed. "What kind of frogs do you find at the library?"

"All kinds," he said, "and I bring them home in here." He pointed at the box.

"Do you have any in there now?" I humored him.

"A whole bunch."

"Can I see some?" I knelt by the box.

He lifted the lid to show me his frogs.

Inside the box were what I guessed to be over a hundred 3 x 5 cards. Glued to one side of each card was a picture of a frog. On the opposite side was a small description of that frog: what it ate, where it lived, and so on. Some cards had a big, red X on the back.

"What's the red X for?" I started to laugh, tickled by the absurdity of what I saw.

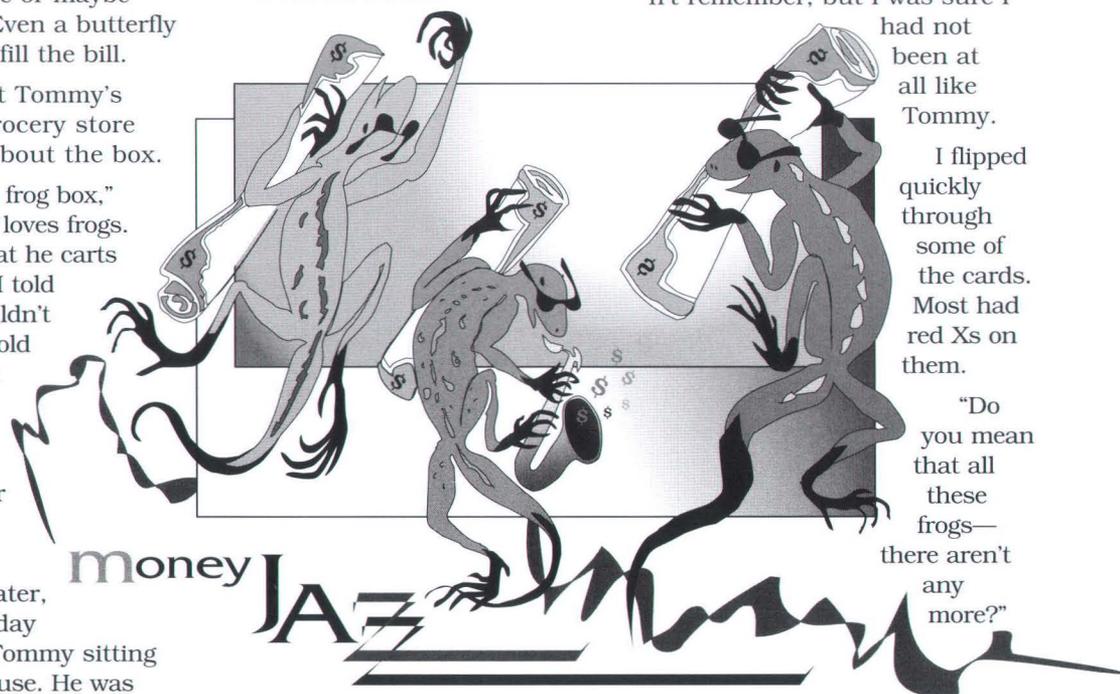
"Those are frogs that are extinct," he said softly.

My laughter caught in my throat. His voice was strangely serious for a boy of nine. I tried to remember what I had been like when I was his age. I couldn't remember, but I was sure I

had not been at all like Tommy.

I flipped quickly through some of the cards. Most had red Xs on them.

"Do you mean that all these frogs—there aren't any more?"



Money Jazz, Cheryl Traugher, Computer Art

"Mmm hmm," he nodded his head gently.

"Well, I'll be." I sat in the grass and looked through the cards. There were more frogs than I could have ever imagined, different shapes and sizes, all colors of the rainbow.

"Where do you find out about these frogs."

"Mostly from books and magazines. I learn about them so when I get older I can help other frogs to not get extinct."

I looked up at Tommy. He was staring intensely at one of the cards, studying it. Somehow, he wasn't just the boy up the street any more.

"You let me know if you ever need any help with the frogs," I said.

"O.K." He smiled, and put the lid back on his box.

The bus came and carried Tommy off to his frog hunt. I sat on my porch and prayed for the success of his quest. The frogs need more people like him, I thought. I guess we all do.



Marta, Nina Rogers, Photograph

THIRD PLACE - POETRY

## Speck

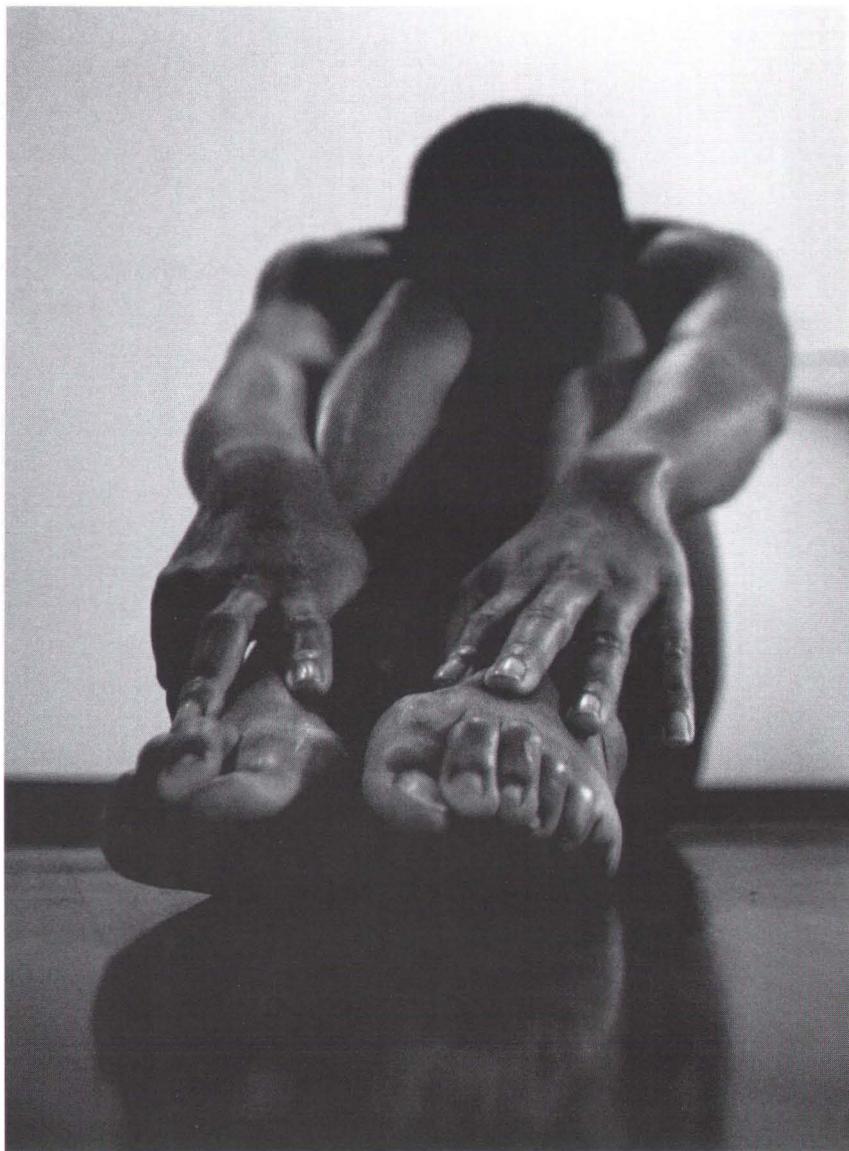
Dale Gibson

*I had an idea for a poem a fleeting glimpse of prose  
a momentary flash of words quickly dissipating  
like smoke becoming fainter every second  
shrinking into a distant speck on the  
horizon becoming tiny and small  
minute gradually shrinking  
into nothingness it  
is fading  
right  
into  
thin  
air*

## Reality Of Dating Or Fish Life

Susan Moné

*I'm like a fish in a river  
Where they haven't been fishing for days  
There's no one who knows I even exist  
to see my very special ways  
All the other fish have been caught  
and I think about the life they lead  
The only things I ever get caught by  
are the currents and the slimy seaweed  
I swam upstream to new waters  
Showing off my power stroke  
A tall dark stranger almost got me that evening  
but his pole was too thin and it broke  
So I had to swim a bit farther  
And I was just about to close the book  
I started floating to the top of the water  
and I glanced around for one last look  
With my lazy eyes, I saw him  
He was getting ready to cast his line  
He had one of those new, sleek, fancy poles  
and his lures were of perfect design  
It took me awhile but I made it  
With all my might I bit his hook  
In the air I felt so naked  
It was cold and my body shook  
I hit the ground where he was standing  
His hands held me with such tender care  
He gently placed me in fresh water  
"I'm in love!" I shouted, I was there  
The sunset was so beautiful  
He made a roaring fire just for two  
I sat beside him in my bucket  
it was clear so I could see through  
I'd never been happier in all my life  
Love is something you just can't plan  
And my happiness would have continued to grow  
if it weren't for that large frying pan!  
The last thing I remember  
was the whack on the back of my head  
And as he stuffed me with bread crumbs  
I knew that I was dead  
He threw me in the skillet  
and cooked me to a golden brown  
It was kind of hard to see you know  
cause my eyes were out and on the ground  
So the lesson here      don't get caught too fast  
when you're a fish that is fancy free  
Everything may not go your way  
look what happened to me!!*



The Reach, Tone Carmosino, Second Place – Photography

## Cowhand's Memories

J. Mark Henley

The winter months are spent. Small snow patches dot the topmost portion of the surrounding mountains. Two creatures wander the fence line, looking for northern range cattle. An old thick coat keeps the rider warm. Long reddish hair keeps the horse warm. The cows are up there somewhere, spread throughout the mountain, wandering.

Jacob enjoys his post. He's worked many jobs, didn't care for them much. He worked in a factory, but ranching suits him. The pay's low, the hours poor, the food lousy, but the time—it's worth it for the time. He likes having a chance to think about life.

To city slickers, this life would seem wasted: slow, mundane, lacking in everyday pleasures. Sometimes Jacob knows how they feel. He hardly ever gets to listen to a radio show. He likes the Chicago Symphony. City folks need those touches in their lives, to make up for all they miss, he thinks. The owners of the ranch have a radio. Jacob understands how city slickers can take so much interest in such pleasures. He lived in the city once, but now he and Clim are more concerned about finding cattle, keeping wolves away, and staying warm. The sound of hooves slowly clop up the dirt

path, worn from endless journeys made by countless horses, ridden by cowhands like Jacob. They should find the cattle soon.

The countryside slopes up, rising from the valley where the Triple H ranch bustles with daily chores. It's not just a ranch, not a thing, really. It breathes life and death. Generations have lived there. City slickers would probably consider it a small enterprise. Jacob thinks of it as home.

"Well, Clim, where do you suppose them cows are?"

Clim doesn't answer, but he knows.

"Do you suppose they wandered up the bluff? I surely hate it when they go up there. Why do ya think they do that?"

Clip, clop, clip, clop.

At Jacob's left, the ground recedes into dozens of beaten trails, the result of endless journeys made by countless cows. Some trails zig zag as if once drunk or crazy cows swaggered back and forth, paying little attention to the most efficient path. Like the veins of a leaf, the trails seem randomly symmetrical.

"Oh well," Jacob says to his partner Clim, "I s'pose cows don't care much for gettin' to one place or another on time." He spits. Tobacco juice hits a fence post. The morning air smells fresh. The wind begins to pick up.

Clip, clop, clip, clop.

The ground continues to rise, leading to a summit several miles ahead. Jacob places one hand on the cantle and one on



Old Bill  
Chenette S. Wangen  
Photograph



*The Great Awakening*  
Julie D. Charest  
Photograph

the horn of the saddle. He stands in the stirrups. He turns and looks behind him. The sloping grassy mountain gives way to shrubs and small spruce trees. Many miles below he can see the ranch and home. Turning around feels good. Jacob's back aches, the result of sleeping on straw. City slickers would be awed at the sight. They only see such beauty in pictures. He's happy not to be in the city, where children work in sweatshops and filth flows down city streets. City folks would never sleep on straw.

"Glad we don't have to put up with that life, huh, Clim? 'Ceptin' for Pearl. She was a looker, let me tell ya, she was. She's the one thing I miss 'bout the city. She could cook too, I think."

He notices Clim's ears. One turns backward, pointing at him, anticipating the story.

"Her daddy thought I was somethin' special, too. I had me a good job. Makin' tanks, it

was. Durin' the big war, the war to end all wars, W-W-1."

Clim's ears both perk forward again, away from Jacob. He's heard the story before.

"I took her to see a play. I had all the luck, I did. Yap, not many men runnin' around right then. They's all off gettin' killed."

Clim pays no mind. Clumps of grass are just within reach several yards ahead. Johnson grass.

"Herb got killed. I liked him, too. His sister was nice, too, but Pearl was nicer. She was real nice. Too bad the war ended."

Clim is starting to work a little harder now. Jacob sees lather between the saddle's chest plate and the reddish brown hair.

Jacob looks up from his long gaze at the passing ground. He sees the sloping grassy plain in front of him. The grass is short. It'll get taller as spring wears on, he thinks. It's taller on the other side. The cows like it. The owners

they don't like to send hands up to get cows, but the good grazing really fattens 'em up. Besides, it really only costs them my pay, and that's not much. "Do you suppose they'll ever stop lettin' cows graze up here?"

Clim knows the consequences of grass reachin'. Jacob has always made that point clear. The horse has to try. The clump of Johnson grass is nearing quickly. Timing is critical. He reaches, grabs the grass. It tastes good.

"Stop that! Now you stop that. Don't do it again. You hear?" Jacob knew Clim had to do it. The consequences for Clim turn out to be small.

Clouds are accumulating in the distance. By afternoon they will bring life to the mountain side. The grass will get taller, the cows fatter. Jacob and Clim will get wetter, but that goes with the job, the life.

"They're up here somewhere," Jacob tells his trusty pal. "Probably on the other side of the south forty. I hate it when they do that."

Clim's ears twirl back again, listening. The climb is getting steeper now. His hooves reach for every step.

"That was some night, it was. She had too much wine, but she smelled good. Even though she tied one on, she was respectable. That's important for a lady. Don't you think?"

Clip, clip, clop, clip, clip, clop.

Ahead are large red boulders. The fence-line butts right up against them, forming a natural barrier. As Clim and Jacob approach, they feel wind whip around the rocks. Jacob grabs his hat. Clim squints. The mountain is steeper now. Jacob

Untitled  
Chris Sjogren  
Photograph



leans forward, taking weight from the horse's back. They will both have to work harder now, earn their pay.

"You know, I thought she really was sweet on me," he says, pushing his wide brimmed hat further down upon his head. The fence is no longer necessary. Strings of boulders encapsulate the south side of the mountain, like warriors keeping roving prisoners from escaping. "She kissed me, you know."

Clip, clip, clip, clip.

"Slow down," he says, reaching forward and brushing the horse's neck with his hand. Clim slows down.

Clip, clip, clop.

"It wouldn't have worked, though. She was a city slicker. She would have liked the mountain though; most do. It's a good home, gentle in the summer." He spits tobacco juice on a rock. His tongue feels a smooth surface where a tooth used to be. "Do you suppose she ever thinks of me?" He tips his hat back for a moment, scratching his forehead where hair used to be. "I wonder what she looks like? Bet she's a looker still."

The summit is only a mile ahead. It has taken three days to get there, thanks to broken fences and ambitious cows searching for extra grub. Jacob doesn't mind. Neither does Clim. The two of them have worked together for many years, almost eight, a long time for hand and horse. Most of the cowhands don't care much for their mounts, unlike Jacob.

The air is clean up here, untainted by factory smoke or politics. Jacob looks ahead, watching grass sway in the torrent of wind that marks the

mountain's cap. "I know they're over there."

Jacob squeezes his knees in the saddle. Clim knows to hurry up. "Damn cows," he says, words announced endless times by countless cowhands.

Clip, clip, clip, clip.

Jacob rubs his eyes. Weariness and memories fill his head. He scratches his chin. Week-old whiskers feel rough against his callused hand. His blue eyes search harder to find the strays. He's sure they're over the mountain top. "I hope they's all up there, damn them. Owners 'll be gettin' all upset if some are lost."

The wind gusts, causing horse and rider to squint.

"She was really the only one. You know that?"

Clim doesn't bother to listen. It's familiar; he heard it last week.

"I think if the war would have lasted longer, I could have had her for keeps. We did more than kiss you know. She must have thought something of me. After all, she was respectable." Jacob looks at the ground, seeing a sprinkle hit the pale dust that marks the trail. The smell of rain is strong. Wind whips past Jacob's face. The

mountain summit is nearing, minutes until they reach it. He spits tobacco juice on the ground. "I was foolish then, should have known better. Too bad I had flat feet. Could have been a war hero. I was luckier than Herb. I wouldn't have ended up like him. Too bad, too. He could really throw a rope. It would've been different if I had gone into the war. Pearl would have thought harder before she let me go. Don't you think?" He reaches down, rubbing his fingers through Clim's red mane.

Clip, clip, clop, clip, clip, clop.

The mountain-top displays a panorama of purple peaks, black streaked clouds, and several miles below, the cows. The two begin their trek to fetch them. Rain begins to sweep down. Jacob pulls on his slicker. "I

think I'll go to town when we get back. Just to look around. Nothin' serious, you know."

Clim leans back, his hooves act as brakes keeping the two of them from sliding. Below them, trails extend down the mountain, the result of endless visits by countless cows.

"I saw a real pretty woman in town last year. We danced. She liked me, and she's no city slicker."

Clop, clop, clop, clip.

"But I'll tell you this, iffin' I ever tie the knot, don't you aworry none. We're partners. Don't care what the ranch says.

We're stayin' together."

Clip, clop, clip, clop.

Clim already knows.



*Passage of Time*  
Nina M. Rogers  
Photograph

## Vending Machine

*Jeannette Leeds*

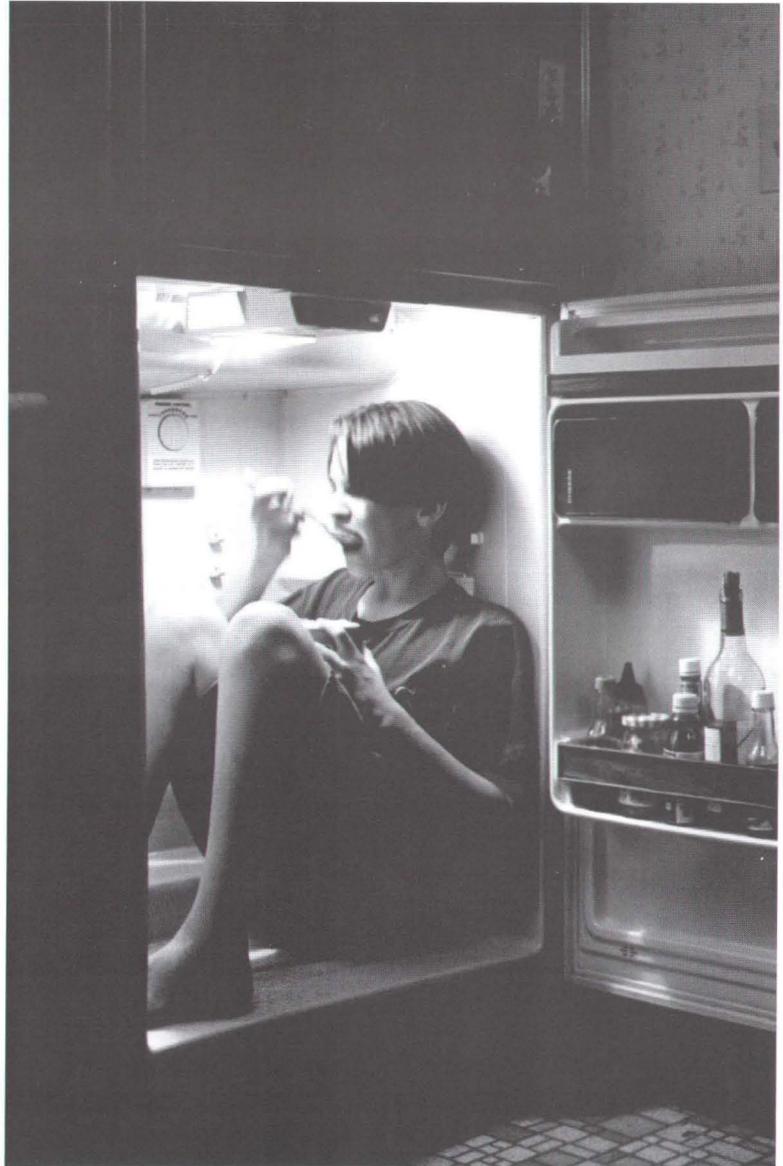
*Wrappers shining  
like soldiers at attention.*

*All types all colors  
there are so many rows.*

*Chocolate, non-chocolate  
chewy, hard, nutty,  
caramel, nougat, solid,  
dark, light, creamy.*

*What number to push  
one two, one five, one nine?*

*The digits flash  
his number's up  
a soldier falls.*



*Untitled, Melba Stephens, Photograph*

## Revolutionaries and Mad Men

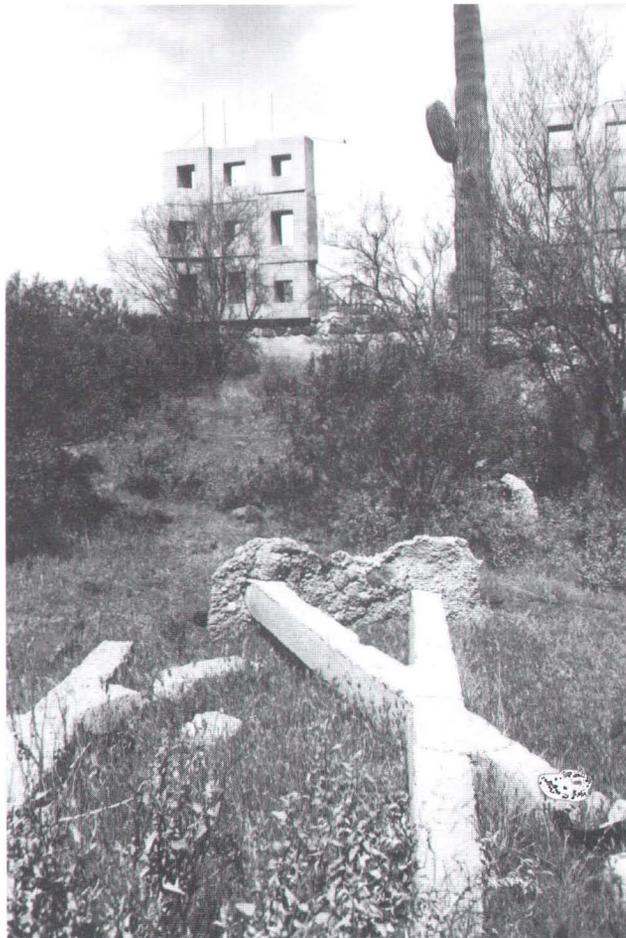
Molly Sadler

The photographer's legs ached. He had been walking for hours, sticking to back streets. The light was fading from the sky and the camera, strapped around his neck, was growing heavy. Around him, more and more houses appeared. One more mile and he would need shelter for the night. Only revolutionaries and crazy men prowled the night: the photographer didn't want to run into either.

Another thirty minutes passed. He looked to his left. A house, actually what used to be a house, stood sagging and defeated. Now, it was a makeshift fortress with the windows boarded and the door most likely barred on the other side. It looked like all the other houses he had seen on his journey. Gone was the simple beauty of neighborhoods and green lawns. No children played in the streets. No parents lazed on the porch with lemonade. These days people just wanted to live; they nailed and hammered. They became voluntary prisoners.

The photographer walked up the path, overgrown with weeds. He climbed the weathered steps and knocked on the front door.

Some peeling paint crumbled under his knuckles. He wiped his hand on his pants and waited. No answer. That didn't



*Death of a Memorial, Jerald L. Munk, Photograph*

surprise him. He expected he would have to hit four or five more houses like this one before someone let him in. He started to turn when he felt something cold and hard touch the back of his neck. A gun.

The photographer's mind whirled. Revolutionary or mad

man? Before he could decide, the man spoke.

"What are you doing here?" he said in a low, angry voice.

"I need a place to sleep." Simple and honest, that was the approach the photographer would take.

"Who are you?" The gun pressed harder.

"I am a photographer. I had to get ahead of the fighting and get some rest. Can I crash on your couch or something?"

The pressure on the back of his neck eased. He slowly turned around. The man in worn-out Army fatigues and combat boots held the gun at the level of his heart. A soldier.

The soldier lowered the gun, turned, and walked down the steps. He headed along the house, around the corner, towards the back door.

"Are you going to stand there 'til you get shot, or are you coming?" the photographer heard

from beside the house. With a sigh of relief, he trotted down the steps.

The soldier was the first to speak. He wanted information.

"Why?" he said.

"Why what?" the man across the table replied casually as he

laid his hand on the beat-up camera beside him.

"Why, when our country is at war, when our lives are at stake, do you pick up that camera and not a weapon?" the soldier asked.

"You don't think this camera is a weapon?"

"Tell me, if you can, how your camera is a weapon," the soldier challenged.

The photographer cleared his throat and looked around the small kitchen, hoping for some insight into the other man. He saw nothing out of the ordinary except a picture. In it was a small boy holding a fishing pole. The boy was laughing.

"Who is that?" The photographer nodded toward the photo.

The soldier was silent for a moment. "My son." He answered in a quiet caring voice.

"Now the photographer was getting somewhere. "Is he still alive?"

"Yes, he is still alive. What does that have to do with it?" The soldier was beginning to get tired of questions.

"How old was he there?"

The soldier stood up. "He was three. Now he's five. If you are done with twenty questions, I'm going to bed. You apparently aren't going to answer me!"

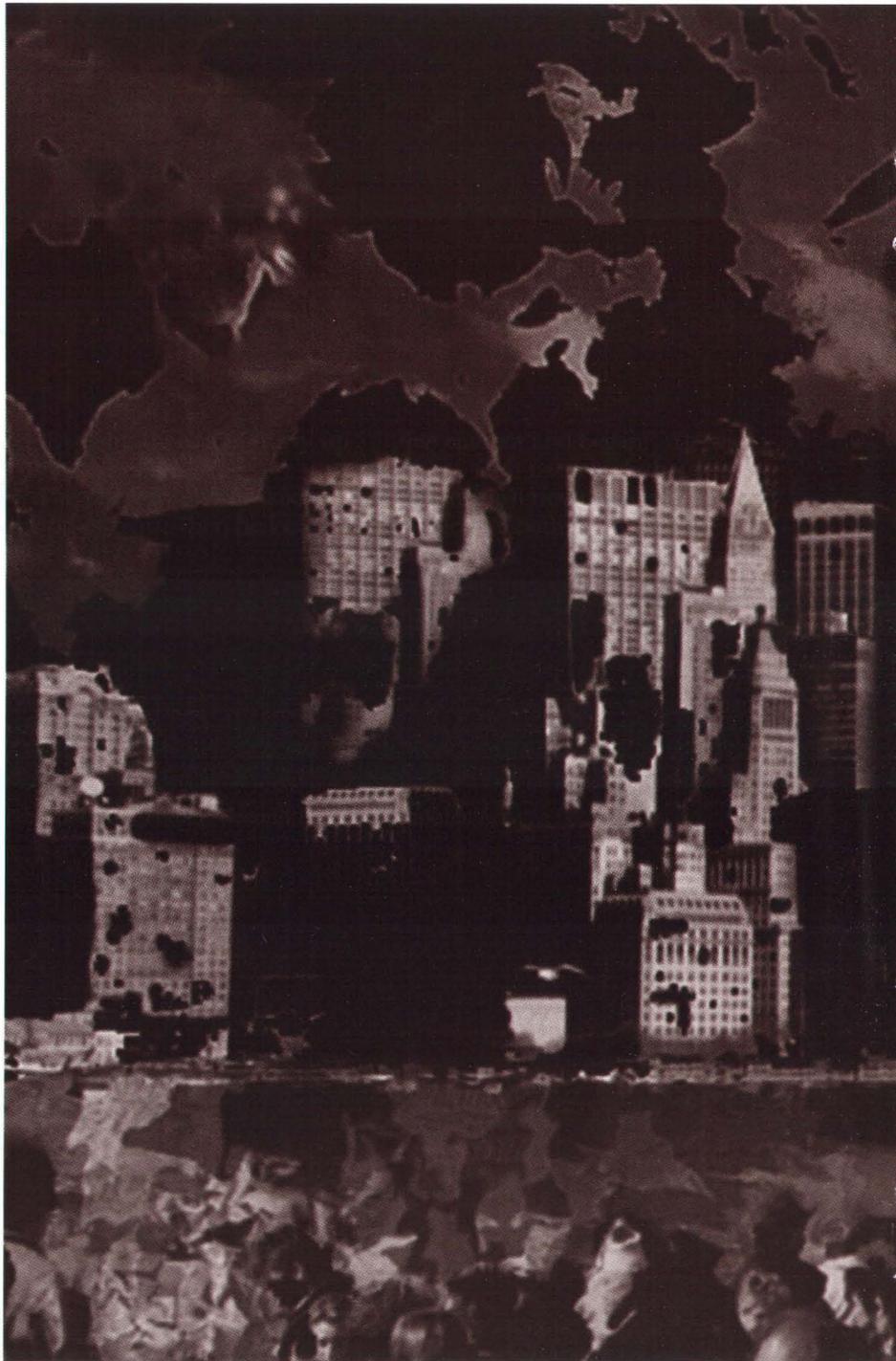
"Wait." The photographer stood up to face him. "I'll explain. I promise."

The soldier sank slowly back into his seat. He didn't like the photographer whose hair was too long and whose eyes too bright. His eyes should have been dull and tired from seeing too much. The soldier knew his own eyes hadn't lit up in years, not even for his son.

"Explain, then, and hurry up. I'm tired."

The photographer looked at the other man. Then he looked at

his camera and began. "He was three. He'll never look that way again. He'll never smile that smile. We both know those eyes



*Forecast, Ron Huber, Second Place – Computer Art*

will never be as innocent, yet there he is. Haven't you tricked time? Haven't you captured a little piece of it? It should slip

right through our fingers. It should fade from our minds and our hearts. You've got it, though. Every time you see that picture,

you go back in time. Imagine the power in that. Imagine future generations being brought back into our war. Isn't power the basis behind any weapon? "

The soldier thought about that. After a few moments, he shook his head.

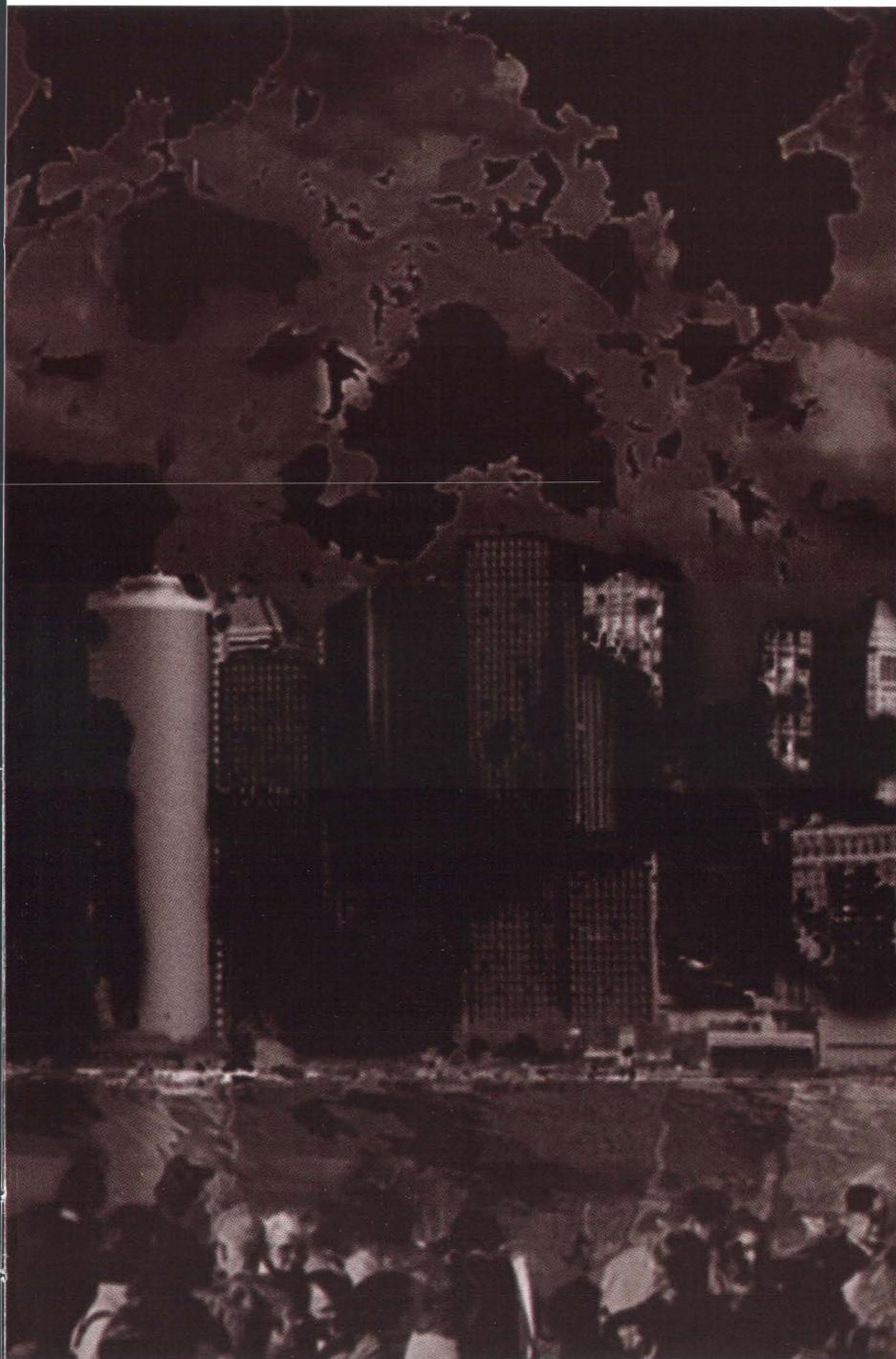
"No. The basis behind any weapon is defense. I'd pick a good old-fashioned gun any day. A camera won't stop bullets whizzing towards your head. A camera won't stop the blood or the tears or the hate."

"You're right," the photographer said as he leaned forward in his chair. "But the camera will see it. The camera will record it. The camera will feel it."

The soldier became agitated. He pushed his beer out of the way and put his elbows on the table, meeting his companion's gaze.

"What good does that do? How will that save my life? How will that save my boy's life? Yes, I fight, and I kill. I do it for my boy. I do it to save my boy. It is people like you who let others die. Do you know how it feels when someone dies? My wife died and I couldn't save her with my gun. Could you have saved her with your camera? I defend others with my gun. I defend myself. I defend my boy. Who the hell do you defend?"

The photographer stood and backed away. "I defend your son's children. I defend their children. How will they know if I don't record it? How will they know the pain? How will they know the hate? And, most importantly, how will they know what to avoid? Are you going to tell them? Are you going to tell your grandchildren what it felt





Untitled  
Christen  
Chipps  
Special Award –  
3-D Fine Art  
Copper Sculpture

like to shoot a man? You won't have to because they will see my pictures and know. They will know."

The soldier surged forward. Through clenched teeth he said, "There won't be any children. If you don't get off your ass and defend our lives with a gun, there will be no children."

"I know," said the photographer quietly. He stepped forward until he stood inches from the soldier. "That's why I need you. You must defend now. You need me to defend the future."

The soldier's face softened. He opened his mouth, but the sound came from the other side of the room.

The photographer turned to see a small dark-haired boy enter the room. He was clad in blue pajamas and old worn-out brown slippers. He blinked at the light and rubbed his eyes. "Daddy?"

The soldier knelt where he was and motioned for the boy to come to him. The boy moved slowly, wary of the stranger. When he got to them, he grabbed his father's arm and ducked behind him.

"It's okay," the father said soothingly as he pulled the boy around and held him close. He smiled up at the photographer as he said to his son, "He's on our side. And if you smile, maybe he'll take your picture."

The photographer sat in the dark kitchen, nursing yet another beer long after the boy had gone to bed. The soldier had stayed, drinking beer after beer, until he finally staggered to the stairs mumbling something about sleep. The photographer was alone with his thoughts. The soldier had been right; he should be defending his country. He had wrestled with guilt since the war began. But why should he fight? He had no family. No one would benefit from his shooting other men who probably had wives and children. The only purpose the photographer could find was to record the war for future generations. Only then did he feel needed.

A bomb exploded somewhere in the distance. The photographer jumped at the sound. Hundreds of people were running as far away from that sound as they could, and here he was, running headlong into it. He sought refuge in this soldier's house, knowing the fighting would follow him shortly. He felt another pang of remorse. Was he putting these people in danger? No, he wasn't

the danger. The war was.

Another bomb exploded shaking the house. The photographer jumped up. The fighting shouldn't be that close. He didn't figure the revolutionaries would be here until late tomorrow. Suddenly, he heard shouts, then gunfire, then screams. They were here.

The photographer grabbed his camera and ran towards the stairs to wake the soldier. He would get some good shots now. He just hoped they weren't good pictures of bad things. He knew, if the soldier died, he would record it. It would be painful, but he would. But what about the son? Could he let the boy die? And if he did, would he aim his camera at the child's lifeless body? He couldn't think about it. He had to wake the soldier.

When he got to the top of the stairs, he looked around, wondering which door led to the soldier's room. The boy was standing at the end of the hall. The child looked at him with wide eyes. The photographer knew the kid had also heard the fighting. "Come on," he said, "let's wake your dad." The boy led him to the door and turned the knob to scramble into the room. The soldier was on the bed, fully clothed, with a bottle in one hand, a 9mm semi-automatic in the other. The boy jumped on the bed and shook his father. The man didn't wake up. The photographer approached him.

"Hey, wake up," the photographer said loudly.

The soldier didn't budge. The photographer pried the bottle from the man's hand. He had passed out.

The sounds of gunfire filled the room. The fighting was right

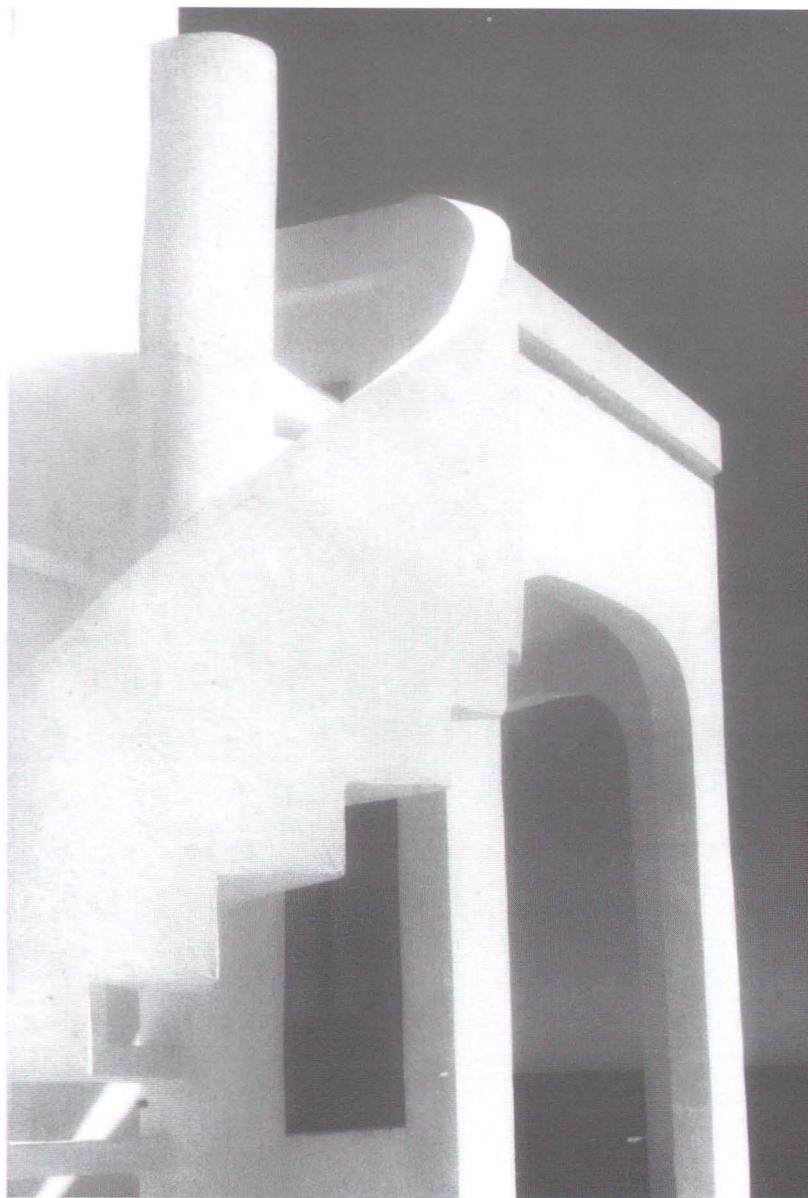
outside the house. The photographer ran to the window. In the street, he saw dozens of men. Some wore all black, some didn't. They all had guns. The photographer wasn't sure who was fighting who, but guns were fired and people fell. A movement below caught his eye. A man, garbed all in black, climbed onto the porch, held his gun at ready, and started kicking the front door.

The photographer turned around. The boy ran to him and wrapped his frail arms around his waist. The man knew he had to do something. He also knew there was only one choice. He scooped the child up in his arms and ran to the bed. He set down his camera and pulled the gun from the soldier's limp hand. With one final deep breath, he ran down the stairs to the living room. He could see a silhouette outside the front door. The door bowed, about to give. He deposited the child behind a recliner, then took a position directly in front of the door. "This is it," he whispered to himself. He raised the gun awkwardly and wrapped his finger around the trigger.

The soldier's head was throbbing. He slowly became aware of his surroundings. He could hear gunfire coming from downstairs. The soldier jumped up only to realize his gun was gone. He looked around frantically. A camera was on his bed. The soldier grabbed it and ran to his son's room. The room was empty. Panic seized him as he headed to the top of the stairs. The scene below him made him freeze. In the living room, his son cowered behind a chair. At least, he was safe. The soldier's breath caught when he saw the photographer. The man

was standing in the middle of the room, his gun aimed and ready. He had the look of a mad man, triumph and pain both registering on his face.

Around him, three bodies, in black, were strewn across the floor, blood pooling under them. Another of the revolutionaries was coming in the door. The soldier suddenly became aware of a weight in his hand. He looked down. The camera. He raised it to his face and looked through the viewer. In that little box, he saw the man in black rush into the room. The soldier's finger found the button and pushed it. The photographer found the trigger and pulled it. The man in black fell as the shutter clicked and that moment was frozen forever.



*Untitled*, Jennifer Sowby, Photograph

## Piano

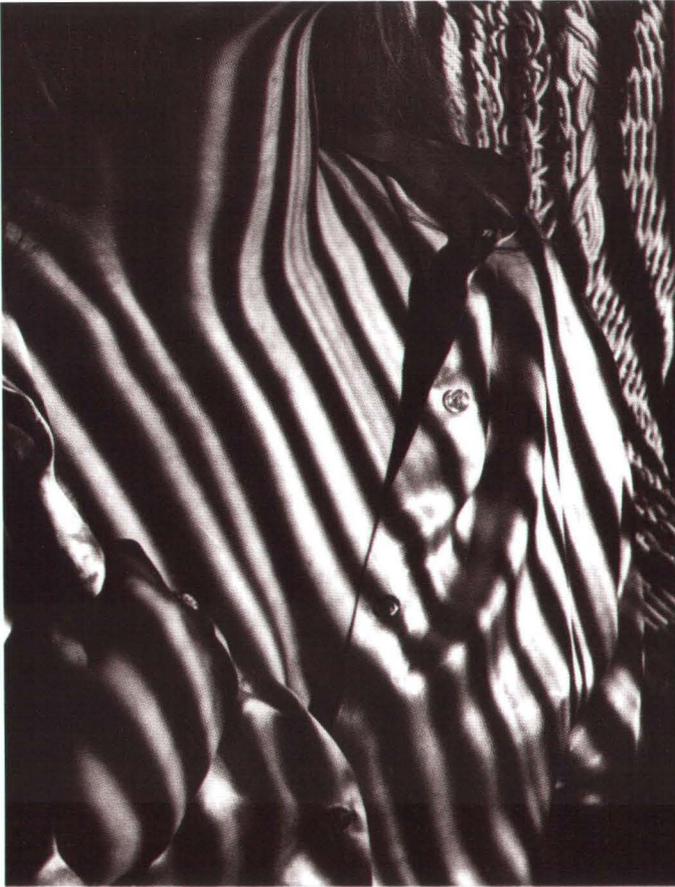
*Jim Akridge*

*That damn piano  
with its broken keys  
no longer will i play  
one hundred years of rust and tears  
have hardened my heart and taken my rhythm  
now squeaky and tone deaf  
nothing worth listening to*

*i can't explain how i feel  
when i hear that same sad song  
played on that damn piano  
i just want to roll up in a ball and cry  
oh, perhaps you thought there was some deeper  
meaning here  
a dissonant voicing of a familiar theme  
please, tune me up, stroke my strings*

*victim of senseless chord changes  
i am a metaphor for bland  
no taste and no relief  
from the emptiness of all that jazz  
hear me see me feel me  
this is what i seek  
a simple two part harmony  
played in a minor key*

*so let the flood come  
and tickle the ivory once again  
sweet sad songs that meant something  
once upon a time i believed it too  
but now all is silent  
except for that damn piano  
that no one wants to hear*



*Untitled, Phil Branson, Photograph*

## Rated PG for Pompous Goose

Melinda Davis

The woman and her goose sat down next to me on the park bench.

She was wearing a hot pink apron and had a fairy tattooed on her shoulder.

Her goose was wearing a matching hot pink ribbon around its neck.

"Things sure have changed. Seems like yesterday I was on the best seller's list."

She had a deep raspy voice. She lit a cigarette and took a long drag, exhaling happy-face shaped smoke rings.

I watched, curious yet cautious.

She started in about, "How could I have known it would all turn out like this?"

I tried not to pay attention, but she had such a way with words—a natural storyteller.

I couldn't help but listen.

"You see," she said. "It all started with Jack. He swears to this day Jill pushed him. Something about a missing pail of water and a hair sample from his broken crown. He wants a trial, but we can't find a jury who hasn't heard his story.

Then there's that Gretel. Eats one small candy house as a child and you'd think she'd eaten the entire neighborhood. She can't stop with the exercise videos and nutrition tips. She's even gotten to Jack Sprat's wife. Now the poor lady eats only polyunsaturated fat.

Oh, I don't even want to talk about Goldilocks and Little Red

Riding Hood. Those two have formed a posse out of the kids from the shoe. They patrol the forest on all the king's horses. Right now, they are chasing out the stepsisters, and all the others Prince Charming rejected. Word has it they've been seen on numerous occasions entertaining the Seven Dwarfs—if you know what I mean. How low can one go?"

The woman furrowed her brow, took another drag on her cigarette, and went on.

"Then there's the sexual harassment suit Thumbelina filed against the Fe Fi Fo Fum Giant. Supposedly, the two were having lunch when the White Rabbit—you know how he is always in a hurry with that Alice following him—fell into Fe Fi Fo Fum's drink. Innocently, Fo Fum commented about 'a hare in his Coke.' Unfortunately, Thumbelina has always been a little short on patience, and, well, now she's suing him.

Then today, Little Bo-Peep told me she saw Humpty Dumpty playing patty-cake with Little Miss Muffet. But you can't take her word for it. Bo-Peep's blind as a bat and dumb as a board. I mean really, she's been known to lose entire flocks of sheep."

I sat there hoping she'd get on that goose and fly away, yet somehow I knew that bird couldn't fly. Its wings were just for looks; that was all.

She lit another cigarette and reached over, letting the goose take a quick drag.

I guess I must have been

staring at this leathery old woman and her smoking goose because she suddenly said, "Oh my gosh! What have I done? How thoughtless of me! Would you like one? They're primo cigs. I get them straight from Joe. He's an old friend of mine," she boasted as she pointed to the camel on the pack.

"No thanks," I smiled as I left her and her goose to smoke, knowing, that such a polite refusal would have made any mother proud.



Untitled, Shannon Reynolds, Photograph

## Sweet Savage Revenge

T. Nieschulz

"I don't think I'll come over after all, Nikki." Sally Kimbel flopped backward onto the bed. "Much as I'd like to see a movie, I think I'll run down to the mini-mart, get Beth Ann Starling's latest romance novel and some major junk food. Then I'll zoom home, take an hour long bath, and glory in the two days of freedom I have while Dave and the boys are gone hunting. God, I hope they don't kill anything."

"Mm. Erk"

"Nikki? Geez, Nik, don't take it so hard."

"Yeah, I was trying to call you a jerk and make you feel guilty, but my call waiting is beeping—so go ahead make your day—and have fun while you're at it. Bye"

As Sally marched to the kitchen, the absolute quiet followed her, an actual presence with her husband and sons gone. She pushed her hair behind her ear and grabbed her purse, her keys, and the cup of hot coffee she had just poured before calling Nik. Dave hated for her to take coffee in the car. But Dave's not here—Sweet liberty and I'm going to enjoy every minute of it, she reminded herself. Ignoring the grubby feeling she'd worked up by cleaning out the stables this afternoon, she crossed the graveled circular drive and got into her aging but trusty Oldsmobile. That long bath would come after she'd laid in the supplies for her little party for one. Dusk was stealing across the farm fields to the east as she drove the five miles to town, singing "My 1979 Streamlined Cutlass Supreme used to be a creampuff, used to be a dream" to a vaguely remembered,

*Untitled*  
Kari Skinner  
Second Place - Mixed Media



lame ad-libbed seventies rock song—the radio didn't work.

When she pulled up to the two-way stop a mile from the mini-mart and craned her neck to make sure there was no cross-traffic, she caught a flicker of movement out of the corner of her eye a millisecond before her passenger door was wrenched open. An unkempt stranger burst into the car waving a sharp knife in tight, menacing little arcs inches from her face. Sally's disbelieving brain registered what was happening.

His malice loomed too large for the small confines of the car. His odor, dirty blond contempt, pushed her disbelief into nearly paralyzing terror. She could see the shocking intimacy of his glistening rosy gums and crooked teeth. His intentions curled his lurid lips into a mocking dance around her fear. He loved it. He loved watching the effect his audacious criminality was having on her.

"Drive." He waved the knife toward the windshield. Sally gripped the steering wheel to keep herself from shuddering and hit the accelerator.

The coffee leaped off the dash onto his thigh and splashed in a wide sweep across his lap. Cursing, he fumbled at the cup. Almost in freeze frame clarity, Sally saw the glinting knife fall from his distracted grasp. She slammed on the brakes and in one motion tore the keys from the ignition, twisted the door handle, slammed her weight against it, and almost somersaulted to the ground beside the door. Her intruder couldn't make it over the console, but he'd torn the passenger door open and was coming after her,

the retrieved knife back in hand.

His movement toward the front of the car to round to her side took on an unreal quality as Sally fumbled with the simple snap to the canister of pepper spray Dave had insisted she place on her key ring. She didn't realize she was breathing in great gasps but he did. He grinned while he rubbed at his groin. He thought she was his for the picking, and she felt hysteria rise in her throat. She would lose her mind in waves of echoing screams in the middle of familiar farm fields, in the middle of the road she'd traveled up and down all her life. It would all end in a vision of those leering rubbery lips.

The snap gave way and her instincts took over. He was almost on her when she raised the canister and a strong narrow stream hit him square in the face. Because he immediately clutched at his face, he didn't get her; she backed out of his blinded reach and sprayed some more. He howled. He seemed surprised someone would treat him so. Indignant really, she thought as she watched in blessedly detached shock. He had staggered against the car and was leaning near the window behind the driver's seat while he bemoaned his bad luck.

Sally was breathing in wispy, spasmodic gasps that she exerted rigid will to slow and it seemed an unformed thought rose out of her hard fought efforts. She moved to the trunk. Did her legs really work? They did. She turned the key and lifted the lid.

The worm was sobbing. Sobbing and retching, really. He'd dropped his knife and struggled for air. The more he struggled, the calmer Sally got.

He writhed against the car and looked like he would drop to his knees. He wasn't faking. He was hurting. Good, you sleaze-bucket bastard.

"Let me help you," she cajoled to the backs of his hands.

"Why'd you do that?" the worm implored.

She sidled around to his back and guided him toward the trunk.

"I was scared," she soothed. When he was directly in front of the fully opened trunk, she jammed him inward in a single, decisive shove that so caught him off guard, she forced his legs to the side and slammed the lid on him before he could react. His muffled protests ignited an exhilarating, triumphant, out-of-control sense of justice.

"Now I've got you, you sonofabitch!!" she raged, jumping at the trunk and pummeling it with her hands.

Her voice hoarse and her hands aching from pounding the metal, Sally slumped against the trunk. Not a single car had passed. Not a sound came from the trunk.

No, that wasn't right. The mewling, puling, sniveling little puke snuffled pathetically. Sally leaned toward the small rust hole near the upper left corner of the trunk.

"Are we having a bad day?" she jeered into the tiny ragged opening.

"I wasn't going to hurt you," the car jacker said.

How do I know he is only a car jacker? Maybe he is a rapist. Or a murderer. Each thought brought back the initial terrifying powerlessness, the reeling disorientation of her sanity

spinning out on a microthin filament.

She leaned over the opening again. "We're going for a ride, Jack."

"My name's not Jack," came the whine.

"It is now," Sally snapped.

Sally had parked at the edge of the mini-mart parking lot. She'd gone in and gotten exactly what she'd needed for her evening of rejuvenating solitude. Including Beth Ann's frothy little romance. After she figured out what to do with "Jack" she would resume where she'd left off. When Sally got home and set her bag on the counter, she still hadn't figured out what to do with "Jack." Turning him over to the police was a cop out, she thought humorlessly. He'd maybe get slapped on the wrists and he'd go out and terrorize other women. Nope, that wouldn't be right, Sally thought as she set the box of Ding Dongs on the counter. And the Mars Bar. And the Hot and Spicy Pork Rinds. The forbidden foods sat in seductive array right in front of Sally's nose, but she was too distracted to care.

What if he manages to kick out the back seat? Or get out any which way? I'm alone. Even if I got the police here, he'd know where I live. Nope, I've got to get him away from here.

She crunched across the gravel and paused over the hole. "Jack!" she screamed at the trunk. No answer.

"I'll shoot holes into the trunk, Jack," she taunted.

"Don't shoot. Don't shoot. You're crazy, lady."

"We're going for a ride, Jack."

His pleas to know her plans

were lost in the throaty roar of the engine. Just before she pulled out of the drive, Sally leaned over and locked the passenger door. Rule number one from now on.

She drove this way and that. She fantasized about sharp implements and sweet revenge but had not found a true plan when she realized her gas tank was almost empty. She pulled into the far island of a self-serve gas station and got out. She flipped open the gas flap, untwisted the cap, lifted the nozzle, and flipped the lever.

"Heyyy," Jack yelled. Loud. Somebody might hear him, Sally realized.

"Shut-up," she gritted into the rust hole.

"Heellpp!" came his cooperative, weasely plea.

Sally didn't really think about it. She just did it. She held the nozzle over the rust hole and dribbled gas in reeeaaal slow.

"What! Jesus! Stop! Please! I'll be quiet," Jack sputtered.

Sally leaned over the hole. "I don't know, Jack. I think I'll just drop a lighted match in here if you say another word. Think that's fair, Jack?"

Aside from what Sally imagined to be the awestruck or at the very least respectfully muffled and unavoidable resettling noises, Jack acquiesced in his gas-fumed little habitat.

Sally finished filling the tank and congratulated herself on her ability to seize the moment. "What you did was a mistake, Jack," Sally said ominously into the rust hole before thwacking the trunk and driving off.

Several hours later, she drove into the police station

parking lot. Before going in to the station, she thumped the lid again. "Jack?"

A very hesitant "Yes?" was the obedient reply.

"I'm going to blow the car up anyway, Jack," Sally listened to the properly hysterical cries coming from the trunk before sauntering inside.

Four officers accompanied her back out to the car to apprehend the dangerous car jacker. In fact, they instructed Sally to stand way back while they opened the trunk and took him into custody. There could be quite a struggle, they said.

They were unprepared for the babbling, endless thank-you's from the slaveringly adoring little felon who wept at the sight of them.

Sally just shrugged her shoulders when he pointed, jabbing the air in her direction and babbled that he was the, "Victim, for gawd's sake."

But just as they were leading Jack into the station, one of the officers turned to Sally and said, "Miss, you may have a gas leak in that old clunker. I'd be careful if I were you."

Sally smiles - not in the least worried about gas leaks. She was going home to read Sweet Savage Revenge.



## Conflicting Commands

*Mary Elizabeth Fried*

*In this world there are conflicting commands:  
use your fork, but not your hands.  
Don't wear white after Labor Day,  
but wear winter white for Christmas you may.  
Encourage your children to follow their dreams,  
within reality this actually means.*

*Do as I say, not as I do;*

*Follow me, what's wrong with you!*

*Always be honest and truthful;*

*Lie about your age and stay youthful.*

*Your elders deserve your respect,*

*but it is you that they neglect.*

*In this world there are conflicting commands,  
but remember, there are always "buts" and "ands."*

*Untitled  
Kari Skinner  
First Place - Fine Art  
Colored Pencil*

## The Dirt Hills

*Glen West*

As Huck Finn had the mighty Mississippi and Peter Pan the magical Never Never Land, we had the Dirt Hills. Within two stones' throw of our claustrophobic concrete confines was a wide open expanse of escape filled with adventure, danger, and refuge.

Our Dirt Hills was a pristine and virgin environment not yet defiled by the modern machinery of men and their monied motives. It was made up of ancient and honorable soil and sand that bore the weight of savage and monstrous dinosaurs and friendly neighborhood dogs alike.

Trees of undetermined antiquity stood in dignified silence, providing grace from a blistering summer sun or a drenching monsoon rain. But these were special trees as well, endowed with the magical ability of metamorphosis. When the summer rains satiated the ponds, the trees miraculously became the famed cliffs of Acapulco where brave and lithe young men would perform death-defying dives from dizzying heights. When marauding invaders from rival neighborhoods descended upon us, they transformed into impenetrable fortresses from which we would hurl our arsenal of dirt clods and rocks upon our unwitting intruders.

But we were not the only ones who took refuge in the Dirt Hills. Fortunately, for some of God's creatures, the Dirt Hills was a "house" that the "big bad wolf" of progress had not yet blown down. There were lizards of disquieted disposition, and

rightfully so. For there were countless hours spent expending our youthful energies in pursuit of these Houdini-like escape artists. There were slithering snakes of suspicious intent, racing roadrunners ready to take on all-comers, comical quail with young in tow, doves of nondispute at peace

with their world, playful prairie dogs of amicable disposition, jumping jackrabbits in flight, coy cottontails under cover, trudging turtles on their timely travels, fat frogs flicking tongues at their flying food, and finicky fish not easily finagled into a frying pan. These and more made up the wild, wild



kingdom of our Dirt Hills.

With summer and the temporary release of all prisoners, (i.e. students) the Dirt Hills became a beehive of frenetic activity. Bike racing and jumping were activities perfectly matched for the Dirt Hill's rugged and diverse terrain. The races were fast and furious. As hearts beat

wildly and legs churned maniacally, we would careen around the course towards the finish line to triumphantly raise our hands in victory or resignedly dust ourselves off in defeat. Bike jumping was no less dramatic. As we plunged down precipitous ravines and hurtled ourselves up the other side and

climbed effortlessly into the firmament, we scoffed at Isaac Newton as we soared, for he probably never had a bike as a kid. So what did he know?

But even with the endless days of summer, spring was our favorite time of year. For in the spring, Mother Nature would do her annual redecorating as she laid down a new carpet of velvety green grass and planted vibrant fields of flowers that exploded with color as if Monet had painted them—but with his glasses on this time. We would each take a place under our favorite tree. Lying on a blanket of cool green grass, we would gaze idly up into a placid sky which God had painted with the blue of a robin's egg. As time stood still for us, the gentle breeze would sing us a mother's lullaby as it moved through the string-like branches of our Aeolian trees. Deep down inside, we knew that there would be enough days in the hectic, pressure-filled real world of adulthood, but days such as these were rare and golden treasures that were to be cherished for a lifetime.



*The Chaperon*  
Tone Carmosino  
Photograph

## Happy Birthday

Kelly Coughlin

Ashlie wanted few things out of her future, but the handful of things she did long for were never going to go overlooked. She finally realized this on one rainy night in March, a night that opened Ashlie's maturing eyes to many realities. The day began no differently than any other. She woke up, ate little, did nothing, and sat in her bedroom waiting for sleep of any kind, either the night's sleep or the never-ending one. She had been like this so long she failed to notice any abnormalities with this daily routine.

She was sitting motionless on her rumped bed when a faint tapping sound from her window demanded attention. Slowly drawing the curtain aside, she saw a teenager who sparked a dim remembrance of something, standing several yards from her window. Though she normally would have been taken aback by this sight, tonight Ashlie knew that fear was unnecessary. She just didn't know why.

The young boy raised his hand in hopeful greeting, and Ashlie struggled to place this familiarity. He approached her window slowly, allowing pebbles to slide from his hand and tumble gently to the yard. As he approached, Ashlie could see his features better. She recognized that he had the classically cliché 'chiseled' look. His big dark eyes complemented his perfect olive complexion and thick black hair. He was too tall and too mature looking for his age, and Ashlie would have assumed him older if she had not known otherwise...quickly she struggled

to understand how she could know this.

She hadn't realized that she had slid open her window until he was only inches from her. He knew her, and she was trying to know him when he whispered a gentle "hello." Her mind tried to grasp the withheld memories of this person...it failed. "Hello," she stammered, praying for time.

His crestfallen look (invisible tears) revealed to Ashlie that he realized her lack of recognition. She knew that this hurt him and she apologized instinctively, 'I am sorry for...'

Cain shook away her regrets...

"Cain!"

The sound escaped her mouth without her realizing it. His eyes met hers.

"Is that all you remember?" he whispered.

Avoiding the question but wanting to answer, she noticed the rain running off his face,

"Come inside...please."

He did so but was too much like her to let her avoid anything. He did not forget his question. "Yes," she admitted painfully (CAIN? CAIN?).

She grabbed a towel while he sat watching her silently. She sat in front of him. They both saw each other—she in confusion, he in knowledge. She refused to ask questions, but she knew (HOW?) that he wouldn't answer them anyhow. They both dimly acknowledged the chiming clock but both knew neither of them could stop

it. Their time together was short, silent thoughts parallel.

"I wanted to see..." he began...

"Please," her mind screamed "don't stop"...

"to see and talk to you." He finished.

The distinct atmosphere of innocent love was all about Ashlie.

'To save me?' she asked knowing the answer.

She didn't know if he physically nodded his head or not, but it suddenly didn't seem to matter.

"I'm alone."

She hadn't needed to say that. He already knew...but still...a single tear rolled down her face, or maybe it was his, but both were the same.

"Are you going to take me away?"

The answer didn't come, or maybe it just wasn't the one she wanted. Suddenly Ashlie wished she hadn't asked that.

They both heard the clock chime again, this time realizing its warning. The heavy chiming of the clock matched the heaviness of Ashlie's heart. The rain pounded harder upon the house and they rose silently.

"It's time for me to leave," he whispered as Ashlie watched the rain hit the window with violent force. She wanted to ask why she couldn't remember him but still knew him, loved him, but she knew the asking was impossible.

"I'll always be within you. You'll always know me, and

because of that, you'll never be alone."

He started to leave, and she knew there was more. He couldn't leave yet; the recognition was so close.

He sensed her thoughts,

"Look at me one final time and then let me go. Start living instead of praying for darkness. You know me; it just hurts to realize it. Live for what I didn't have...I love you." His words were the words of her soul. She stared intensely at him, interlocked in the love, hoping to be able to admit what she knew before he left, before it was too late. She spoke quickly, "I had the most beautiful baby boy once. He was angelic looking, perfect in every way...every way but one. He was just too little. His tiny heart couldn't bear the world. He was my world, and I died with him."

His visible tears awakened her heart as her hand grasped his, "I never got to see him grow or walk or speak. He would have been a young adult today."

She finally saw Cain for the first time. She hadn't known all of that had existed within her. She hadn't know anything was left inside of her at all. She had been so alone for so long that this feeling of love was as unexpected as his visit.

"Would you have been proud of him?" he asked in hope, sud-



denly seeming like the innocent child he was (Hush, little baby don't say a word).

The answer not to be spoken, her eyes said it all. Their eyes locked as he stepped back into the rain,

"Good-bye" he said softly.

"Cain?...Happy Birthday."

The confusion was gone, this angel gave her her life back.

"Are you alone now?" His voice was dimming; she spoke

only the truth,

"Was I ever?"

He smiled his acknowledgment of her appreciation. The clock struck midnight, and it no longer was her baby's birthday. He was gone, but Ashlie knew on that night that the things she wanted out of her future were to live and to start loving..."to make up for what he didn't have." Ashlie looked up and said good night to her son.

Smooch  
Julie D. Charest  
Photograph



## I Love Gears and Cogs

*Jeannette Leeds*

*I love gears and cogs  
things that go DING and ker-gock  
ger-werk, ker-plunk, rat-tat-tat,  
wiz, ka-zap and a flap, flap, flap.*

*I love the sound of a ker-chunker  
coming from any ol' rusty junker.*

*My ears perk  
at ger-werk, ger-werk.*

*a PICK-PICK-PING  
is a marvelous thing.*

*A ger-blop, ger-plop  
makes my heart almost stop.*

*Wer-zip, tic, tic, tic  
makes my pulse beat quick.*

*One thing I do like and that is for sure  
is a lowly hum and a soft steady purrrrr!*

FIRST PLACE - POETRY

## Flattered Dreams

*T. Nieschulz*

*I could wrap myself in laboratory filaments  
in perfectly blended fibers  
grown on the back of a petri dish.*

*I could daub myself in potions  
of harvested ambergris*

*I could slink and glide down aisles of  
products screaming,  
"Keys to the Universe."*

*Or if I could daub and wrap and glide,*

*No one would scuttle sideways  
from the prow of my being.  
No one would scurry  
from the aura of my wake.*

*If all that I hold dear were held  
in vaults not green  
and round  
and bulging,  
Stretched  
with the weight of failure,*

*If all that  
didn't teeter on the back  
of my very mobile home,  
With tatters neon screaming  
where I lost my place  
in the novel of my own life;  
If the very remnants  
didn't moor me to the earth;*

*If all that.*

*Then maybe I could drive  
right into I's-R-Us  
for a new look.*



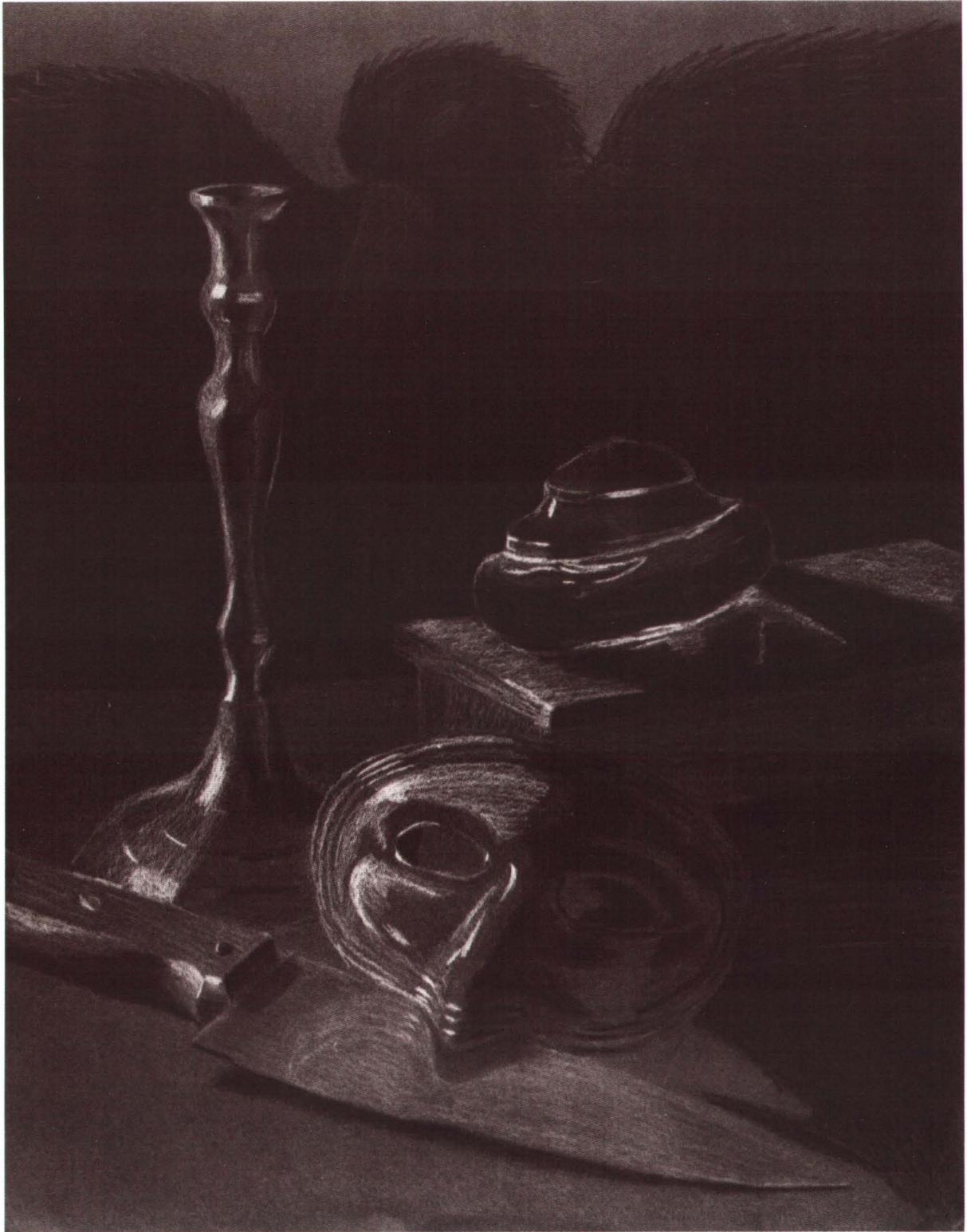
## These Eyes

*V. Paige Nyland*

*Can haunt you love you scare you  
these eyes can touch you like fire  
like ice like liquid like steel blade  
these eyes hold you make love to you  
wrap around you caress you  
these eyes puzzle you shake you  
fill your ears with sounds  
these eyes reflect you  
give to you take from you  
make you need for a voice  
these eyes.*



*Diana, Nina M. Rogers, Photograph*



## I hate the end of nothing

*William Maurice Sprague*

### White

*Glen West*

*White is a cloud on a soft spring day,  
a canopy of cool for children at play.*

*White is a bone bleached and dry,  
a life departed, a soul on the fly.*

*White is a pearl of beauty and worth,  
from a mere grain of sand is this prize given birth.*

*White is the snow falling silent on the ground,  
a blanket of tranquillity, made of icy down.*

*White is a chalkboard filled with years,  
of wisdom and knowledge, of sweat and of tears.*

*White is a heart, pure and true,  
spotless, faithful, rare, and few.*

*White is the hair of the aged and wise,  
keepers of memories, of better days gone by.*

*White are the wings of angels on high,  
ministers of mercy, ready at God's side.*

*White is definite, absolute, and sure,  
not a could, a maybe, not a gray spectral blur.*

*White is the heat of lovers entwined,  
where two bodies and souls sing in harmony and rhyme.*

*White is the page waiting to hold,  
all that's within the heart, mind, and soul.*

*White is the color of a descending dove,  
quietly resting on God's example of love. ENG*

*Royal words and false promises  
Have to hold the bottle with two hands lest I lose it  
Heaven forbid  
I am one of millions  
Just like me  
Writing poetry to ease the suffering  
If only I could add an R  
To ease  
And make it Erase  
I would*

#### CREDITS

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Jan Boerner  
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##### *Typing*

Dawn Meyer

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JoAnne Ramirez, Jerod Sako,  
Helena Scorski, Hiroko Sudo  
Rhonda Vail, Shelly Weaver  
Laurel Young

##### *Cover Design*

Laurel Young

##### *Table of Contents Design*

JoAnne Ramirez

##### *Photography Assistant*

Paul Dameron

##### *Art Dept. Faculty Advisors*

Meryl Poticha and Dean Terasaki

##### *Printing*

Bierl Printing

A large tiger is the central focus, walking towards the viewer in a savanna landscape. The tiger has orange fur with dark stripes and a white chest. In the foreground, a white skull lies on the ground. The background shows rolling hills under a bright sky with some clouds. The overall tone is somewhat somber due to the skull.

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