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A J o u r n a l O f W e s t e r n O k l a h o m a

W E S T V I E W

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Stylesheet

1. Submissions should be typed on 8.5" x 11" white paper; prose should be double spaced. Include a SASE.
2. Submitted artwork should be suitable for black and white reproduction. Work should be no larger than 8.5" x 14". However, photographs or slides of larger work may be submitted. Submitted artwork with a SASE will be returned.
3. We accept and enjoy formal verse, free verse, and prose poems.
4. Include a brief biographical sketch for our contributor's notes.
5. We welcome submissions on a 3.5" disk formatted for IBM or Macintosh. Please include a hard copy of your submission.
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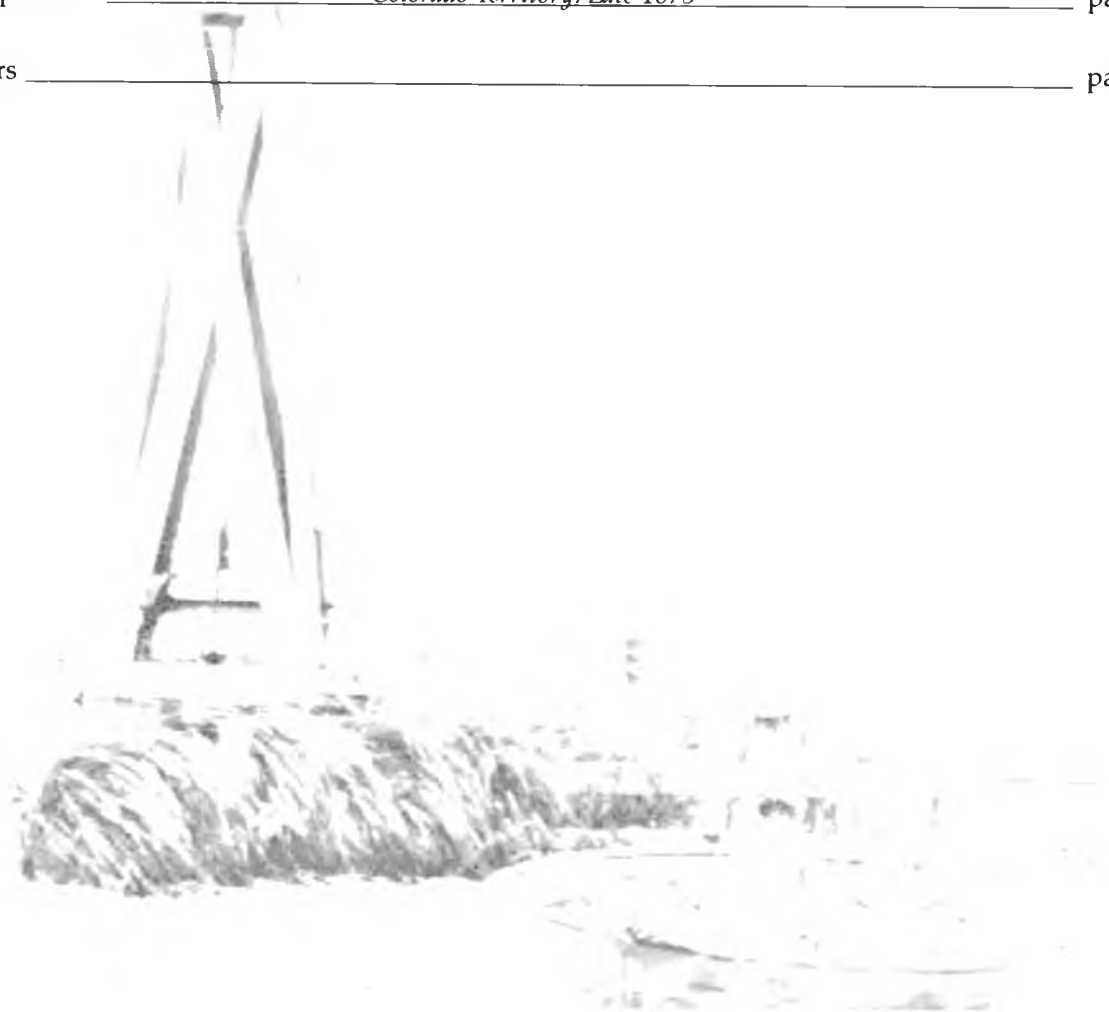
Cover photograph, "Sunrise at the Grand Canyon" by Pamela Rodgers

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Fred Noonan Flying Services

by W.P. Kinsella

"Courage is the price that life extracts for granting peace. The soul that knows it not knows no release from little things."

-Amelia Earhart

"Empty your pockets," Allison says.

"I'm not positive I want to do this," I say, as Allison gently turns me toward the plane, a single engine antique I'd guess was from the 1920's. While I rest my hands on the side, Allison like a police officer, parts my feet, pats me down as if I were under arrest.

She extracts a business card from my shirt pocket, my wallet from one rear pocket, my money clip, bills and change from the other. My keys and comb, a pen, Kleenex, my bank book from my side pockets.

"Today's the day," Allison says.

"We're really going to. . ." I stammer.

"Don't you want to make love with me?" Allison asks, knowing full well the answer.

It's been three days since we've had sex. Allison has had five a.m. calls each morning. Her business is setting up photo shoots. Sometimes she is also the photographer.

I'd do anything for Allison. It is as if she has me under a spell of some kind. Conjured, my catcher, a Cajun from Bayou Jeune Fille, Louisiana would say. Her voice, low and sultry is like mesmerizing music. She is my fantasy. Today, she wears a white sun dress with a few slashes of Aztec gold across the breasts and shoulders. Her Titian hair falls in waves to the middle of her back. Her cool blue eyes are the color of dawn.

"But, where's my uniform? We're doing a shoot, aren't we? Redbird Flying High. You said that was what it would be called."

I'm babbling. I can't believe this is happening. When she finishes emptying my pockets, Allison discards the contents onto the tarmac at our feet. I

think of my identification, credit cards, photos. All the years of my life casually tossed away, like ripping apart a stack of calendars.

"I told you whatever was necessary to get you here," she says, her voice a purr. She slips under my widespread arms, bobs up in front of me, between me and the plane, locks her arms around my neck, kisses me feverishly.

Though we've only known each other a short time, I am in love with Allison, thrillingly, magically in love, so much so that my senses seem more acute than I ever remember them. In restaurants I can gaze into Allison's eyes and hear conversations at other tables, smell the tantalizing food odors from nearby plates. Colors have a new intensity. In the on-deck circle I can pick her out in the stands twenty rows behind the Cardinals' dugout, tell at a glance what earrings she is wearing, read the smile on her lips as she watches me, her tongue peeking, massaging her bottom lip as it often does.

Allison works for the Cardinals' public relations firm. We met because early in the baseball year the star players have to pose for photographs that are eventually turned into posters and given out to fans on various special promotion days during the season. Four Cardinal regulars, being the 3, 4, 5, and 6 hitters in the lineup, the power of the order, were assigned to pose collectively. We met Allison at the ballpark at 9:00 a.m., an unheard of hour for a major league ballplayer to be up and alert, let alone dressed in an immaculate home uniform and ready to have makeup applied.

"I raised me a prize hog when I was in 4-H as a kid," said Foxy Rinehart our home run hitter, who grew up on a dirt farm near Nevada, Missouri, "and after I washed him, perfumed him, and tied a blue ribbon around his neck, he wasn't no purtier than we are this morning."

Foxy said this as Allison was powdering his



forehead and nose. She had already made him apply some lip gloss to his large, pouty sweet potato of a lower lip that was always cracked and sunburned, looking like it was beginning to swell after a recent punch in the mouth.

"Soon as you boys are presentable I'll drive you out past Webster Groves to a big lumber yard; we'll meet the photographer there."

When she came to powder me, I was sitting on one of those blue metal folding chairs that are about as comfortable as ice. She nudged my knees apart and stepped in so close my nose was virtually between her breasts, her perfume was overpowering, expensive. I could feel heat radiating from her.

"Got to make you beautiful," she said.

"I'll reward you handsomely if you do," I said. "I'm thirty-one years old and no one's been able to come close so far."

Allison was wearing a rose-colored blouse. She was close to my age, (thirty, I found out later) none of the other players on the shoot had turned twenty-five yet. I had once owned a spice-colored shirt the same magnificent shades of yellow and red as Allison's hair.

"Maybe we'll settle for rugged," she said. "I'd need putty to fix you up properly, maybe even cement," and she laughed a deep, throaty laugh that was genuine, not the sad little tinkle a lot of women pass off for laughter. Her breasts bobbed in front of my face. She was wearing what I decided to think of as safari pants, khaki with about a dozen pockets on the thighs and below the knees. "Your nose has more pores than a pumice stone, and three bandits could hide behind it the way it's bent over."

"I used to be beautiful," I said, "until my face collided with a second baseman's knee a couple of seasons back. Doc said my nose looked like a zucchini that had been stepped on."

I stared up into Allison's eyes and was surprised to find a clear, almost iridescent blue, I expected hazel or green to match her hair.

We spent the whole day outdoors at a sawmill, amid the tangy odors of cedar and other cut lum-

ber, the spongy ground layered with sawdust, a lathe operator set up in the foreground, supposedly turning a spoke of white lumber into a bat, while the four of us posed around him in different combinations, looking strong and rugged, some in batting stances, some holding the bat like a rifle, or cradling it like a baby. A sign behind us read CUSTOM LUMBER. There was a photographer, a wisp of a man with the body of a child and a windblown fringe of white hair. Allison arranged the poses for him, even snapped a few of the pictures herself.

"I hope you don't mind my saying so," she said directly to me, "but you look as though you're planning to kill worms instead of hit a baseball."

Then she repositioned me and the bat, leaving her hand on mine just an instant too long as she moved the bat up my shoulder. Placing her hands flat on my shoulders she turned me a few degrees to the right; she left her hands there a long time, letting me feel the warmth filter through my uniform.

I scowled, trying to look at her as if she'd just poured a drink in my lap, but I couldn't quite bring it off.

"I've seen a few games in my day," she said. "When I was growing up, my dad and I had season tickets in K.C. Name the guy who let George Brett's fly ball drop for a hit so George could beat Hal McRae for the batting title?"

"He played left field for the Twins, and his name started with a Z."

"No points for a partial answer," said Allison, adjusting the angle of the bat, smoothing my uniform.

She hadn't flirted or acted even vaguely familiar with the other players. I wasn't surprised at the attention she paid me, I'm used to that kind of thing, but I was a little worried, for I found myself attracted to her. What concerned me was that many women are captivated by athletes, by famous people in general, often not by the person at all, but by the power they represent.



"Scott," Foxy Rinehart said to me one day, "The opportunities are endless. If a ballplayer on the road sleeps alone, he does so by choice."

I agree.

Wariness was one of the reasons I didn't make a move on Allison.

All athletes, but especially married men, even semi-married men like myself, have to be careful of the women who make obvious overtures. Some women collect ballplayers the way boys collect baseball cards. Then there are the lunatic few hoping for a chance to file a paternity suit.

As Allison and I talked over a lunch of sandwiches and soft drinks at the sawmill, the other players never seemed younger to me. They horsed around, like the boys most of them were, talking music and nightclubs, girls and cars. The day was one of my rare off days in St. Louis. After the other players were dropped off, Allison and I went for dinner, where I found myself opening up to her more than I had with anyone in years.

"Ballplayers shouldn't marry," I heard myself saying, "or if they do they shouldn't have kids. Once a baby comes along, the wife doesn't go on the road anymore, another child and she skips spring training. Then, when the oldest goes into kindergarten, the family stays home, wherever that may be, until school is out. That means they can't come to the city where you're playing until July, and if the city is like St. Louis where the summers are molten, the family stays home in the air conditioned mansion. Half the guys on the team are in my situation. The season is long and lonely and absence, as they say, does not make the heart grow fonder. The distances that are at first only miles become chasms of resentment on both sides. Everyone thinks they can handle the separations, almost none can."

"I know all about separation," said Allison. "I've got a guy, but he's always made it clear his career comes first. He's a foreign correspondent with CBS. Now you see him now you don't. I'll come home and find him there, he sleeps for 48

hours, we make love, and then he's gone to Bosnia, Lebanon or some other trouble spot for six weeks."

"I didn't even know I felt the things I've just told you," I said. "I feel a little foolish for laying all this on you."

I could tell by the way she looked at me that all I had to do was make the first move. But I didn't. I needed to be certain Allison wasn't a collector, that she was someone who wanted me, not the uniform, the power, the celebrity, the money.

Whatever my wife and I had once had was gone. I'd known it for a couple of years, but didn't want to admit it, even subconsciously. Though we were not legally separated, when I went home to Memphis at the end of last season we lived separately. I still saw a lot of Sandra and the kids. My phone call home, (I still call about three times a week) a call that at one time produced laughter and I love yous, and, from me, a pitch by pitch recount of the plays I'd been involved in that evening, and from Sandra a recounting of her day and the cute things the kids did and said, was, as usual, only a long litany of complaints from Sandra about the children, the weather, the house.

I listened, saying virtually nothing, wondering how things could have changed so much without either of us being conscious of it.

After I hung up I sighed, reminding myself that I only had two or three years left as a pro. "I'll muddle through," I thought. My best years are behind me, I've got to adjust to the inevitable slide, the hanging curve ball that only makes it to the warning track because my timing is off 1/1000 of a second, the step I've lost in the outfield, the lapses of concentration caused by my thinking of my deteriorating abilities. "Things will improve when I'm home for good," I thought. But the thought of being *home for good* with a wife who has become a stranger, a family I barely know, left me depressed, my limbs lead weights, dragging me down.

Allison phoned about a week later.

"I've arranged for another promotion poster,"



she said. "One using you alone. Just got the idea last night. I pitched it to the Cardinals this morning and they love it. It will be called REDBIRD FLYING HIGH."

"What does it involve?" I asked. A public relations person once asked several members of the Cardinals, including me, to dress in costumes identical to the team mascot, Fred Bird the Redbird. Another suggested the whole team should be photographed mud wrestling to promote Fan Appreciation Night.

"Oh, nothing to worry about, it will all be done on the tarmac. We'll rent an old biplane, the kind

they used to use for stunt flying, we'll stand you out on the wing with your bat. We may put a helmet and goggles on you, I haven't decided. We'll get a big fan and the wind will be blowing the pilot's scarf and my hair. I'm going to sit behind the pilot. After the shoot we'll paint in a background of sky and cloud and ground below. It will look exactly like we're flying at a thousand feet."

I agreed to do the project. We talked on, arranging to meet for dinner after that night's game. That evening I did make the first move.

"For the rest of the night we're going to be the only two people in the world," I said. "No one else exists, family, business, baseball, whatever—all erased. Just us, we can say anything, we can. . . ."

"I know," said Allison. "It's all right to be in love, just for tonight," and she placed her fingers on the back of my neck, and found her way into my arms. I lifted her hair with my left hand, kissed along her neck, nibbled her earlobe.

After long, sweet hours of lovemaking, of enjoying the terrible thrill of being close to someone after being alone for such a long time, we talked dreamily of what it would be like if we never had to open the door and go back into the real world. But the real world intruded on us soon enough, for even though I didn't want to, I began listing the many dissatisfactions of my life.

"I'm tired of baseball," I said. "It used to be my whole life, but I'm past my prime. I play for the money. I know I'm never going to hit three home runs in a game again, never going to bat in a hundred runs or hit thirty homers. I'm batting .280 but the fans boo me because I'm not the hot shot kid I was seven seasons ago."

Allison leaned over me, her hair trailing across my face, we kissed.

"I'm sorry," I said. "I was the one who was going to be sure we didn't talk this way. I've already whined about my bad marriage and my career. Sometimes I just wish I could disappear."

"What if I told you you could," said Allison, her



Photo by Joel Kendall



lips against my cheek, her musical voice a thrill.

"I'm too well known to disappear," I said matter of factly. "No matter where I'd go, some eight year old would appear out of the woodwork to ask for an autograph."

"Unless you really disappeared."

"What do you mean?"

"Suppose there was a unique place," said Allison, a very special somewhere where all the people who vanish without a trace from the face of the earth—a place where they all go to live."

"You're not serious?"

"I believed you had an imagination," said Allison. There was a hint of annoyance in her voice.

"What the heck do you mean?" I drew away from her. I sat up, swung my feet over the side of the bed, sat with my back to her.

"Take it easy," Allison said, reaching out, tentatively touching my shoulder. "There's more going on here than you're aware of."

I recall that and other conversations as I hold the telephone receiver in my hand and dial part of the number. All but the final digit in fact—I wait and wait, then hang up. I feel like a high school kid dialing for a date, tongue clotted, brain paralyzed with fear. I can almost hear my Cardinal teammates razzing me. I can see the freckled face and fishlike mouth of Foxy Rinehart, who fancies himself a comedian, saying, "Come on, Scotty, how scared can you get dialing long distance information?" Foxy has no idea what's at stake. Baseball and partying are his only interests. He doesn't have an imagination. He has to be constantly entertained: women, drinks, movies, TV, dancing, video games. Allison is right. I have an imagination, something that can be both a curse and a blessing, as I am finding out.

What I've decided to do is, for the first time in my life, believe in something magical. Allison has brought me the magic, or at least gifted me with the key to unlock magic.

I take a deep breath, imagine myself stepping into the batter's box against Greg Maddox or Steve Avery. I think of the way I let the tension flow out of my body, concentrating so fiercely I can hear my blood circulating as I challenge the pitcher. I'm as good as you are, I think. I've hit you before and I'll hit you again. Burn it in here, across the plate within reach of my bat.

The number I'm calling is information for a town not far from St. Louis. I dial, all the while stifling an urge to hang up at the first ring.

If Allison could see me, I think, as I often do when batting on the road, at that instant when the pitcher releases the ball, that instant when I know the pitch, from my point of view is perfect, know it will travel toward me in slow motion, almost freezing as it approaches the plate where I will make full contact driving it high and deep toward and beyond the outfield fence. I want Allison to feel the joy an instant like that brings me; I want her to share the rush that completing this seemingly innocuous phone call gives me.

"Information for what city, please?"

"Mexico, Missouri," I reply, my voice shaky.

"Go ahead."

"A number for Fred Noonan Flying Services?"
There is a long pause.

"Is that N-o-o-n-a-n?"

"Yes."

"I'm sorry, sir, but that is a silent listing."

"But, it's a business."

"I know that's unusual, but I've double checked. I'm sorry."

Relief and disappointment mix within me as I hang up. Perhaps Allison, and everything that's happened to me in the past few weeks, is part of an elaborate hoax.

But who would do such a thing? If it were a scheme, it is far too elaborate to be hatched by any of my teammates, their idea of a joke is to nail someone's cleats to the floor or put Jello in a jockstrap.

I recall more of our first night together. Me



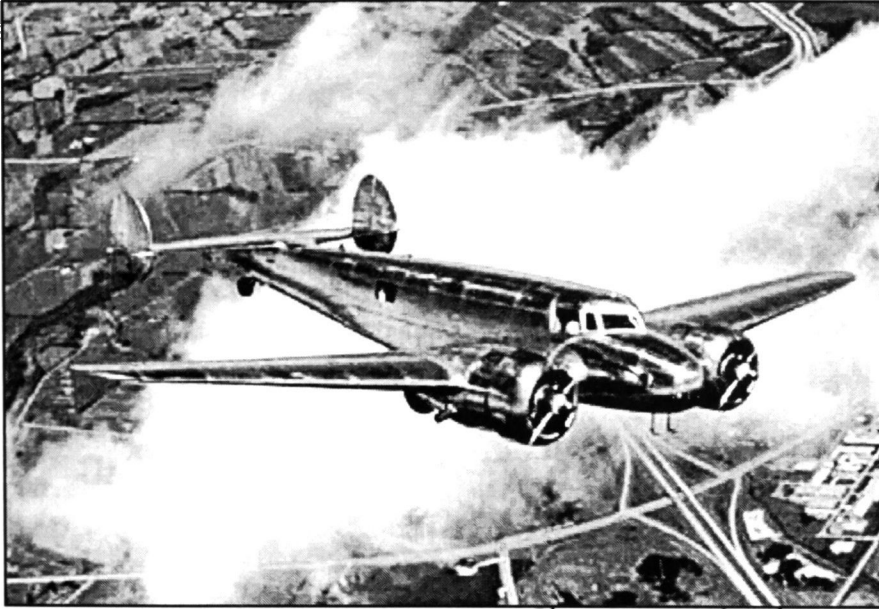


Photo courtesy of airplanes.com

quizzing Allison.

"Who lives in this place?"

"The truly lost. Those who need a second chance."

"Like the faces on the milk cartons? All those lost children?"

"Some of them, the ones who truly disappeared, the ones who weren't kidnapped by a parent or murdered. The ones who *really* ran away."

"I suppose everyone there is a descendant of Ambrose Bierce."

"Some of them might be. There are thousands of people there now."

"That's an odd idea. How did you come up with it?"

"I'm special," said Allison. "Didn't you sense I was special?"

"Where is this place and how do we get there?"

"I know a way to get there, there's a company called Fred Noonan Flying Services."

"What makes you believe this place exists?"

"Someone I know went there. Told me how to get the number of Fred Noonan Flying Services."

"Went there?"

"Took nothing with him. Caught a taxi to the airport at 1:00 a.m., gave his wristwatch to a man

who was sweeping the floor, and vanished."

"Did you call the number he gave you?"

"I thought about it for a few weeks, and one night when things were going badly, both personally and professionally, I did. But information said the listing for Fred Noonan Flying Services was silent. Isn't that strange?"

"Who is Fred Noonan?"

"Do you know the story of Amelia Earhart?"

"Of course. He was Amelia Earhart's navigator. I saw a movie about them. Susan Clark played Amelia Earhart."

"Did you know they flew into yesterday? I went and looked it all up. They flew off from New Guinea on July 3, 1937, for a 3,000-mile flight to Howland Island. But Howland was a day earlier; it was a flight into yesterday. And they were never heard from again."

"And you think they ran away?"

"There were rumors that Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan were in love, that they found an isolated Pacific island and lived out their lives there. She was a very independent lady. He was tall and handsome, looked a little like Clark Gable, and Amelia was pretty, blond and boyish with a sensual mouth. Historians tend to think they blundered onto the Japanese doing something sneaky on a small atoll, and the Japanese executed them."

"You don't think so?"

"We're all around you, Scotty. Waiting. Anything is possible. There is a place, a town, a small city really, good climate, relatively isolated. A place where strangers are discouraged from settling, unless of course, they're running away from their past. A place where the police chief files *all* missing person reports in the waste basket."

"You have a bizarre sense of humor."

"I know."

We were silent for several minutes.

"So, Jimmy Hoffa? Was there a young woman like yourself who was turned on by dangerous men?"

"If he's with us, and I could tell you but I won't, it may be because we needed a union organizer."

"I see."

"Do you?"

"Suppose I want to go. How do I get there?"

"Fred Noonan Flying Services only flies to one destination," said Allison. "People just know. Like birds migrating."

Our eyes met, Allison's smile quizzical, challenging, full of irony. Her pink tongue peeked between scarlet lips.

"I meet some pretty odd people in my line of work," she said.

"Like ballplayers?"

"Sometimes. But there's more. I could name the town where Fred Noonan Flying Services is located. There's a song about Amelia, written and recorded literally hours after she and Fred vanished. Back in the thirties that was how disasters and major public events were dealt with." Allison began to sing, "Happy landings to you Amelia Earhart, farewell first lady of the air."

Until that moment nothing truly extraordinary had ever happened to me. I'd been a successful athlete, I'd led the National League in home runs and RBI's, but I'd never experienced anything other-worldly. As Allison sang, I had a vision, and I understood that she did indeed know some unusual people. I saw myself and Allison flying in a very old plane, there was a pilot in leather helmet and goggles. The pilot's scarf snapped in the wind just in front of our faces, Allison's hair flowed behind her, the wind strafed my face making my eyes water. The vision was gone in a tenth of a second.

"Name that town," I said.



Photo courtesy Fred Burnam

Allison scratched around in the bedside table, she wrote the name of a town on the back of her business card.

"When you reach the operator, you ask for Fred Noonan Flying Services. The rest is up to you."

"I'd want you with me."

"That's the kind of beautiful lie we agreed to tell each other tonight, but just for tonight," Allison said, cuddling down into the bed, resting her head on my chest.

"It's not a lie," I said. "I mean it." Then a thought struck me. "This doesn't have anything to do with the new poster—REDBIRD FLYING HIGH?"

"Well, it does and it doesn't. You have no idea how hard I had to think to come up with the idea. I had to see you again, and I didn't have the nerve just to call and say, 'Hey, I know how you, how we can disappear forever.'"

"You wanted to tell me that, even before tonight?"

"I knew everything you told me tonight, just by looking at you. I have enough experience to recognize lonely when I see it."

"So, the poster was just an excuse."

"To get us together tonight, yes. The Fred Noonan story has nothing to do with the poster, but everything to do with what we agreed about this evening. We can say anything, do anything. Maybe Fred Noonan Flying Services is my fantasy. Scotty, I can't imagine anything as wonderful as starting all over—a completely fresh start, with you."

"Would there be baseball?" I laughed as soon as I said it. "Baseball must have a greater hold on me than I imagined."

"There would be baseball. But the kind you could enjoy; you could be a star, a big fish in a small pond, or you could coach, or just be a spectator. I can't imagine a small, quiet American city without baseball."

"Could you be happy with someone who wasn't famous? A quiet country boy from Memphis who happens to know a little about holding a bat?"

"Why did you put me off last week?" asked Allison. "We could have been together then, without my having to invent the poster."

"I know I must have puzzled you. It has nothing to do with morality. It's just that I never met a woman I thought I'd want to be alone with after we made love. With you it was different. You have no idea how much I wanted to take your hand and say, 'Would I be way out of line if I kissed you?' Of course, I knew the answer without asking the question. I may have appeared oblivious to all the signals and body language, but I wasn't. With you, Allison, I knew that if we made love, I'd never want to leave you, and I wasn't ready to carry that weight just then."

"I understand," said Allison, cuddling closer.

"Are you telling me the truth?"

"What's truth?"

Before I leaned over to turn out the light, I studied the name of the town Allison had given me, committed it to memory, in case in the morning the back of the card was blank.

The next morning I made my first attempt to contact Fred Noonan Flying Services.

Allison and I spent the next four nights together. Then the Cardinal home stand ended. We left for an eight day road trip. I had plenty of time to mull things over. Even if it was all a beautiful dream, I didn't mind. Suppose I dialed again and the operator told me the number was still silent, I thought. There would always be a lingering hope that the next time I tried I would be put through. Hope, I decided, is all anyone needs. Lack of hope, I decided, was what was wrong with my life.

"I'll be back in St. Louis late Sunday," I said to Allison. "If I get through before then, and I've got a feeling I'm going to—like a day when I look in the mirror and can tell by my reflection that I'm going to get three hits—maybe we can take a little plane ride Monday morning?"

On the third day of the road trip, in Atlanta, I dialed information again, and as I did, the same



excitement filled me as when I dialed Allison's number, as when I waited to hear her throaty voice, the laugh clear as singing crystal. As the number rang, I breathed deeply, imagined myself in the on-deck circle, a game-deciding at-bat about to occur.

"What do you suppose it will be like . . . this town, this city, this final destination? Can you give me a clue as to where it's located?"

"It may be only a few feet away," said Allison enigmatically. "Though it may take a half day to get there. It will be peaceful, no more pressure for you to perform on the field or off, for either of us. Tree-lined streets, people working at things they love to do. Everyone will love their job. Merchants will treat their customers like human beings, and customers will act in a civilized manner. There'll be no bureaucrats, only reasonable rules that everyone obeys, no alcoholics, petty criminals, no zealots of any kind."

"Did you pick me? I mean personally? I'm beginning to think chance wasn't involved."

"What do you think?"

"Are you real? Where did you come from? Did you just appear out of nowhere in full bloom?"

"I'm as real as you are."

"Which doesn't answer my question. What about . . . over there?"

"I'm more at home over there. There are other dimensions chattering all about us, one or two, perhaps many. It's like when the Northern Lights envelop you, the static, the eeriness, the half-heard conversations. Have you never heard a whimper when you knew you were alone? Voices in the foliage? The phantom hand that brushes a cheek? The spooky feeling of being watched? Occasionally, one of us is able to invade dreams." Allison stared into my eyes.

"I tried. Very hard. I wanted you to dream of me. I wanted you to feel, when you first met me, like we were old friends."

"Have you done this before?"

"We're watching all the time. We always need

new blood. I volunteered to find some."

"I don't care for that idea. What am I a stud service?"

"Oh, don't be so sensitive. Of course you fill a need. Everyone does. The void you fill is my need for a life partner. I decided on you after I made certain you fit all the criteria. If we hadn't hit it off, I would have looked elsewhere. But I fell in love with you."

"Was I your first choice?"

"Of course."

"And would you tell me if I wasn't?"

"No."

"And if we hadn't hit it off?"

"Well, there's a very nice playwright in New York. A Bismarck, N.D. boy, whose first play was a massive hit, and who hasn't been able to write anything else since. He's sad, frustrated, not enjoying life."

"What will happen to him now? Will someone else save him?"

"Perhaps. That's not for you to worry about."

There is a metallic clang, like a soft door chime, as a recorded voice spells out the number for Fred Noonan Flying Services. The blood roars in my ears like the ocean as I quickly copy it down, wait for the recorded voice to repeat it so I can be certain I have it right.

I quickly dial the number.

"Fred Noonan Flying Services," says a gravelly voice.

"I'd like to book a flight," I say.

"Right. To where?"

"A special place. I'm told it's the only place you go."

"That's right. We have only one destination."

"Can you tell me where that is?"

"Sorry. It's kind of a mystery tour."

"Right."

"How many and from what city?"

"Two," I say. "St. Louis. Monday morning, if that's convenient."



"It's convenient."

"Do you mind if I ask a question?"

"Shoot?"

"Why the name?"

"Of the company, you mean? Fred Noonan? No secret. We're dealers in old aircraft, nothing newer than thirty-five years old. We supply planes and pilots to movie companies, TV shows, air shows. And we run these mystery tours, people like to fly back into the past. The early days of aviation hold a lot of mystery. You know we've got a Lockheed Electra, big silver jobby, just like the one Amelia and Fred were flying when we... when they disappeared.

"Fred Noonan was a lot more than Amelia's navigator. He was one of the pioneers of American aviation. Twenty-two years of flying over oceans; he helped establish Pan American Airways; he was one of the first instructors and aerial navigators. Yet he's almost completely forgotten, ask anybody and they'll tell you Amelia Earhart was alone when she disappeared."

He sounded as I imagined Ernest Hemingway would have, rugged, ruddy, a scuffed bomber jacket, a battered pilot's cap.

"You can't take anything with you. The clothes you're wearing. Pockets empty."

"I understand."

"Good. We get people trying to sneak strange things along. Bags of money, jewelry, pets. There was this banker had ten \$5,000 dollar bills in each shoe. One lady had a canary bird hid in her hairdo."

After the conversation with Fred Noonan ended, I sat quietly for a long time. I felt the way I had almost ten years before, when I was first called up to the Cardinals from Louisville: full of anticipation, positively twitching with excitement.

I can see the plane, taxiing down the runway. Fred Noonan at the controls, crouching behind his windscreen. Allison and I behind him. Ascending. One Redbird flying high... flying toward yesterday.

But it isn't that simple. In fact it's ridiculous.

The next time I see Allison I try to make light of the whole situation.

"This is all some kind of elaborate joke, right?"

"Do you love me?"

"That's answering a question with a question. But, yes."

"Have you ever heard of limerance?"

"No."

"It's a term to do with going out on top. Quitting while you're ahead, leaving the party before the gin runs out. At its most extreme it involves suicide. A couple like us, in the wild throes of first romance. We know things will never be so perfect. All life's problems are going to wear us down. Your career will end. Maybe we'll have children. Our priorities will change."

"If we died now..."

"I don't want to hear any more. Hell, anyone can have a business card made up that says Fred Noonan Flying Services, get a telephone listing..."

"I don't mean die, die. You know that." Allison covered my mouth with hers, her tongue electric, her taste nectar.

"Is it far?" I shout.

"A fair distance, not all in miles," Allison replies.

"Do we have enough fuel?"

"Relax. Lindy flew the Atlantic in a plane this size. Besides, Fred Noonan would never let us run out of fuel."

"Is there really a place where we can start over?"

"Of course."

"Sing to me, Allison."

Her voice is so thrilling, somewhere between sex and sunshine. "Happy landings to you..."

The wind, as we whip down the runway, blows Allison's long hair and white scarf back toward me.

"Farewell... first lady of the air..."

The fringe snaps against my cheek, stinging like a willow switch.



For a Friend on the Atlantic Coast Who Has Not Written Back After Four Letters

by Charles Rafferty

—for R.S.

The world is like this, isn't it? The outer
satellite of any system is the one
most likely to join another. Sometimes
moons get tugged from their orbits
or electrons add up to make a metal deadly.
Sometimes, like tonight, a man decides
the bar on his block is better than the one downtown.
Let this be the permission you didn't have
to ask for. I can only hope you'll think of me,
though, when the tide is high and stormy.
Believe it is breaking across your beach—
its hurricane fence and panic grass—
to touch the lakes and the landlocked seas,
parts of a whole divided by mere geography.
I'll finish this bottle for both of us. By no choice
of my own, I am becoming a scholar
of the physics of loss, the calculus of finding
time to write, the immutable laws
that govern the necessity of touch.



Domesticity

by Dale M. Kushner

When the fields outside town have been twice disked,
and the furrowed black earth
is scoured with light,
cattle get brazen.
The warming ticks of March

gentling down their flanks
sets them to lather and kick
at the slightest knuckle of wind,

as though spring-sun could lift
the anchor of their domesticity
and ancestor ghosts
come loosened in their blood.

A farmer's fortune is hobbled
by luck: gentle rains and beveled sunlight
can easily slip back under
the icy coma of a March sky.

But season after season, each day is the same:
the farmer drives the herd
over muddy tractor ruts
to a split-oak gate where the largest cow

lows and lows
to be let out into pasture.
Night after night, slung against his barnwood door,
he counts their return—the single-file cortege—
their headhulks obediently lowered

for stanchioning.
He must shackle them
before a slice of moon can hook itself
into the blackness of their eyes,

rouse anarchy in their bones. As once, in winter,
mucking out a starlit barn, he heard
his girls begin to stamp and moan in their stalls,

their silver breath
so hot, if he'd touched it,
he'd be burnt forever.

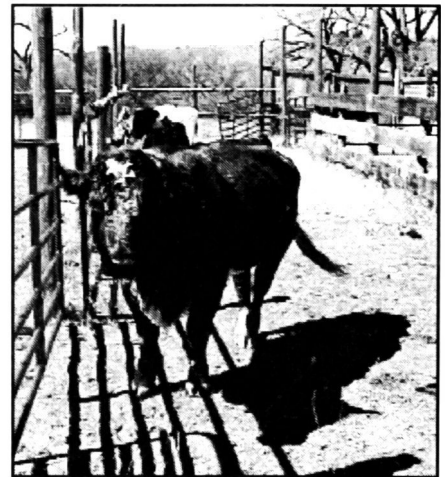


Photo by Joel Kendall



eau-de-Cologne

by Fran Kaplan

My sister Ruthie drank a bottle of Chanel No. 5 cologne. She was two-and-a-half, pushed a stepstool over to Mother's mahogany dresser and helped herself to the opened bottle on the beveled glass tray. The bottle lay on its side, a few drops moistening the dresser, evidence of the happening. She toddled around, weaved in and out of the bedroom and fell into a deep sleep on the plushy carpet.

Mother lifted and held Ruthie close to her chest, kissing her head, and turning her face away when she whiffed Ruthie's breath. She called the pediatrician.

"What should I do?" she cried.

"Let her sleep it off, it'll pass through her in twenty-four hours," he said.

Her urine smelled of perfume for a week.

I cannot remember a time she wasn't talkative and hyperactive. Dad nicknamed her "Gorgeous Tornado," and my role as only child for eight years suddenly changed to big sister. Since I'd been five years old, sitting in the backseat of our car and listening to my parents argue. I wanted a sister. She'd sit close to me and share my loneliness, but I never wanted such a beautiful one.

Sunday brunch for aunts, uncles, and close friends at our apartment was as much to offer Mom's bountiful omelets and decorated trays of salads, as to view my sister who resembled the Gerber baby. Dad would hold her, tickle her chin, turn her smiling face toward the guests and announce, "You're a beautiful baby, perfect in every way." Had he ever said that to me?

I vied for the privilege of wheeling her in the stroller, its hood down to expose more of my two-year-old sibling's cherubic face.

"You may wheel her, but be careful." Mother strapped her in and adjusted the seat. I never understood what "be careful" meant, but if I entered and left the back door ten times a day, Mother said

it.

I knew I could be a better mother to her than the one we had. I wouldn't allow people to make such a fuss about her beauty. I'd emphasize her sweet disposition and easy smile. I'd let her crawl on the floor and get dirty, would not carry white shoe polish to keep her soft-soled shoes spotless, and I'd leave her hairbrush home, to enjoy her tousled curls.

The sun made my face feel happy as I gripped the buggy handle, released the foot brake and pushed my star sibling. My fingers turned white from holding too tight. I'm being careful, I thought. What if I accidentally let go of the buggy and it rolled down the steep hill at the end of the block? Just pretend the handlebar is fastened to my hand, and don't think about it.

The more I told myself to forget it, the more I dwelled on it. She's strapped in, maybe she'd enjoy the ride. I think it could be fun. I loosened my fingers, just a bit, and quickly re-clasped the roller handle. Ruthie gave me her ready smile. I pushed and let go, pushed and let go, grabbed to hold on, and Ruthie laughed each time. See, she does like it.

I let the stroller roll away to see how fast it could go. "Whee, isn't that fun, Ruthie?" I reached for the lightweight buggy as it picked up momentum. I ran faster, my arms stretching toward it. What have I done? I can't catch up.

I ran faster, losing my breath, and extending my arms until I was close to the handle, almost touching it. Reach. Grab, stop it, run faster, faster. Ruthie giggled, sucked in her breath as the wind pushed her downward and farther away. "I didn't mean to let go, I didn't mean it," I cried, running and gasping for breath.

The buggy stopped, partially hidden, into a lilac hedge. I never experienced such outdoor silence, not even a bird sang. Ruthie, please, make a



sound, please. Sweet scent of lilac blossoms filled my head as branches scraped my arms. I pushed aside the pinkish-violet plants, unbuckled my sister and held her as tight as she allowed while squirming and screaming at me like she understood what I had done. An angry bump on her forehead and three red scratches on her left cheek validated her fury and pain. I pulled the buggy, rocking it hard with my free hand, but couldn't dislodge it. I carried her home while she kicked and howled. Thankful she was alive, I felt scared and heavy-hearted at what I had caused.

I wanted to leave her at the door and run away. "My God, what did you do to her?" Mother reached for her outstretched arms.

"I didn't do anything. The wind took the buggy, I couldn't run fast enough to grab it, I didn't mean to do it." I wished Ruthie would stop crying, making it worse for me.

Mother ran the kitchen sink water and washed the scratches, Ruthie screaming all the time and Mother giving me sour looks. She took a table knife from the drawer, and pressed it to Ruthie's forehead swelling. I hoped the magic of metal against skin would take away my punishment as well. I moved closer to watch the progress.

"Go to your room, now," she shooed me away. "And stay there until your father comes home and sees what you've done to your sister. Your soul will be scattered with paprika," a saying she'd heard from her own mother when she disobeyed. I felt red-hot pepper singeing the tips of my hair and burning the bottom of my soles, wondered when I'd be able to walk again without pain.

In my room, I held steel scissors to my forehead. Its cool blades comforted me as hot tears stung my face with fear and uncertainty. Did I mean to do it?

I placed the scissors on the desk, glanced into my parents' bedroom across the hall. Assorted perfume atomizers stood on the dresser tray in a parade of tall, shapely crystals. I tiptoed in, raised a bottle of White Shoulders to my nose to breathe its gardenia scent. I squeezed the bulb to my opened mouth until its fine spray flowed to the back of my tongue and burned my throat. Its sting, like swords, brought sobs of pain as I replaced the bottle to its beveled glass tray on the mahogany dresser. I wouldn't tell anyone what I did. It would be better in 24 hours.

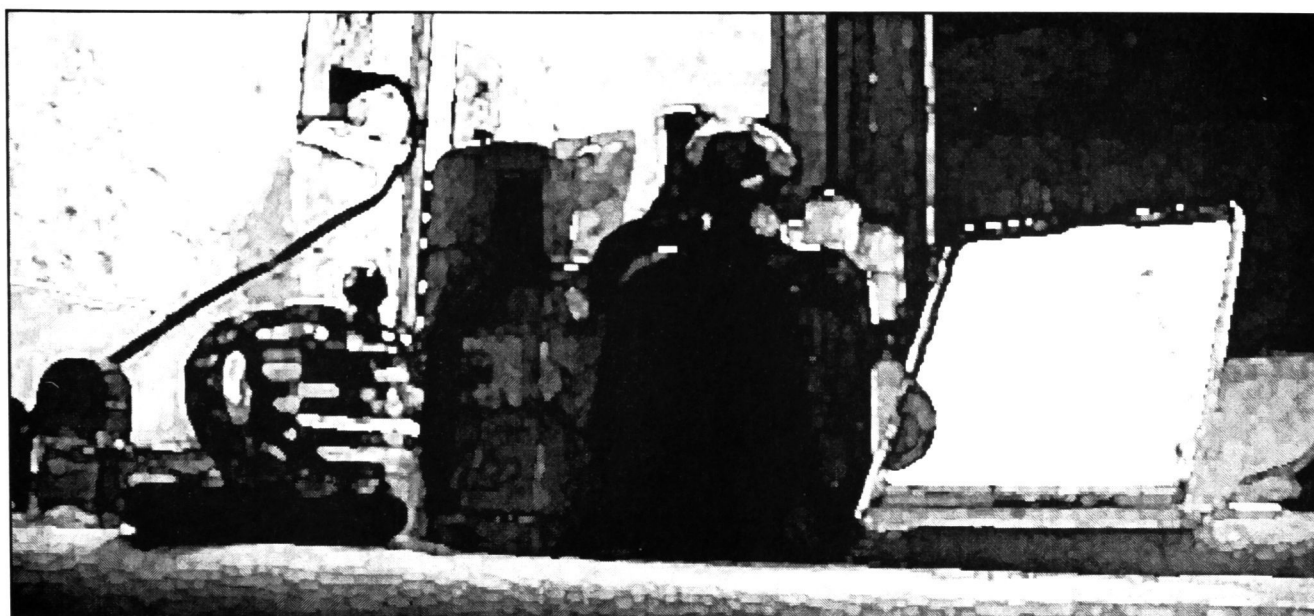


Photo by Joel Kendall



Elizabeth Gurney Fry, Saint of Newgate

by William Jolliff

"I have seen the two greatest sights in London—St. Paul's Cathedral, and Mrs. Fry reading to the prisoners in Newgate."

Her father was one whose devotion,
stewardship, and family name doomed him
to wealth. His daughters wore brilliance and silk.

On a visit to her London cousins, Betsy fell
into the hands of the ancient Quaker preacher,
Deborah Darby. She shook the girl's shoulders.

"You," she said, "will be feet to the lame,
speech to the dumb, eyes to the blind.
The Lord has revealed it." Elizabeth believed.

She quit her silks, took up plain speech
and Quaker gray, and was just as beautiful
as before, to the hundreds she taught to read,

to the thousands she fed, to the thousands she dressed,
and to her husband. She wed Joseph Fry,
bore ten children, was mistress of his estate, Plashet,

and then became a traveling Friend. And when the voices
without said, "Stay home with your children,"
the voice within said, "Get thee to Newgate,"

where the wild women asked, "Who is this angel?"
and the starving women asked, "Who is this Christ?"



The Dead

by Warren Carrier

The dead have a life.
They live where I live.
In my restless bed.
In my salt pitted window that gives on the sea.
In the forms of my flesh.
In my choices.
In my invented stories.

My grandfather skins a squirrel.
My father shouts from his pulpit.
My mother cans peaches from Michigan.
I carry anger and love over my shoulder
like stones in a sea bag.
The dead arrive in the morning
with flotsam on a storm tide.
At night they fill my ears with sad songs.



The Secret of Fireflies

by Pamela Rodgers

The kingdom, the prince, his bride, they would all soon vanish now that the fresh bug remains on the windshield had been noticed by Stella's mother. "Get out there, Carl." Stella's mother pointed at the prince and his kingdom. "Wipe that off." Stella's stepfather, Daddy Carl, tried the clogged windshield sprayers one last time, but nothing. He then let out an exhaustive sigh and left the '62 Impala idling while he pulled what had come to be called the bug rag out of the Chevy's trunk. With one swipe of hand, he wiped the bug kingdom off the windshield with the ammonia soaked towel remnant. The delicate winged prince and his bride both dissolved and vanished as quickly as the imaginary kingdom Stella had created.

In front of the family's vehicle, a Cadillac convertible with the top down moved up a car's length in line. Daddy Carl threw the bug rag back into the green Chevy's trunk and got behind the wheel. Just as the Impala's engine fluttered, Daddy Carl hit the gas and knocked the column gear shift out of neutral with one practiced push from the palm of his right hand. The car lurched forward unevenly, rocking both Stella and her Aunt Lula in the back seat. Stella's mother braced her hands against the front dashboard. "You have to drive that way?"

Daddy Carl, unmoved by his wife's comment, stopped the car just inches from the convertible's back bumper, then leaned over and whispered something hurriedly into her ear, something that made them both smile. Ahead of them in the convertible, a young couple seemed locked to one another in a wrestler's grip. Even when the Cadillac had rolled forward, their lips had barely parted. From the Impala's back seat, Aunt Lula let out a rattling curl of laughter, "Oh my stars!" she grveled, and began a long chain of dry coughs. Stella pulled herself up so she could see over the top of the bench style front seat. Her stepfather spelled something out so that only her mother and her aunt

could know what he was saying: h-o-r-n-y. Her mother's mouth parted, showing teeth that seemed oddly white between her bold red lips. Her mother's eyes were exactly like her own, a marbled blend of green-blue, except her mother's included a tiny brown speck of color next to the left pupil. Stella had been told this was a birthmark, a tiny pebble in the pool of family traits. "It's nothing, Stella. Sit back now." Her mother's voice was curt like it was when Stella had done something wrong. But what had she done this time? She repositioned herself all the way back against the car's seat. In this position, her sweaty legs dangled, not quite touching the floorboard. Although almost seven, she was short for her age, a problem that seemed to frustrate only her mother. Stella recalled hearing the exercise man on TV say that stretching was good for you no matter what size or how old you were. And as Stella thought of this, she happened to press the bottom of her flip flop sandals into the back of her stepfather's seat. At that moment, a yelp came from the seat in front of her.

"My back!"

She'd forgotten her stepfather's back problems, his slipped disk. Stella immediately dropped her feet, but it was too late, Daddy Carl had already turned his head, wincing, his dark brown hair receding at the temples, his thin face camouflaged beneath a pair of black rimmed safety glasses, the untrimmed, shaggy brows and the pale brown eyes that seldom laughed. "Dammit," he winced, holding his lower back with one hand.

Unconsciously, Stella heaved a large amount of air out of her lungs and brushed a pile of honey curls from her face.

"Now, that's not what you say. You could cause your dad not to walk again, you hear me, now what do you say?"

"Scuse me?" Stella's voice was frayed with regret. Her green-blue eyes released tears that made



their way down her cheeks. Her world silently became a small dent in the vinyl on the back of Daddy Carl's seat, a dent in which everything lived. She did not keep track of how long she had focused on this new version of the world before being interrupted by her stepfather retrieving a length of blue tickets from the red-splotched teen at the ticket booth window. The Chevy rolled forward once more and the occupants found themselves inside the nearly empty gravel parking area full of lines of four foot tall silver speaker poles. So far, only a few were being used. Each of the parked car's windows were rolled down. A single grey umbilical cord-wire reached from the pole to the driver's window.

"Is this OK?" Stella's stepfather moved the car ahead in idle. A machinist by trade, he usually smelled like oil and cleaning fluids, and no matter how much he washed, even though he used the strongest pumice cleaning soaps, he could never completely clean the slightest hint of indelible grease from the smallest fissures in his hands. He was also wearing his safety glasses, usually reserved exclusively for work, but donned this evening due to having accidentally dropped and stepped on his regular pair of spectacles. The safety glasses had side lenses and Stella remembered the first time she'd seen them and asked what those were for. "Can you really see out of the sides of your eyes with those?" Her stepfather turned his head now, although not intentionally, so that Stella could see through the strange side lenses. Her real father was named Russ and he lived across the river

in Indiana on the edge of a small town called Darmstadt. She didn't see him very often, so she really wasn't sure exactly what he did for a living and her mother had never really told her. On the rare occasions when Stella had hugged him, she'd noticed that he always smelled like Aunt Lula's medicine.

Aunt Lula, who sat next to Stella in the car, piped up in her raspy frog's voice, "That will be just fine Carl." Stella's mother agreed. Then for several moments, the occupants of the car were jerked and jolted, as the vehicle teetered back and forth on the mound of dirt designed to raise the front of the car up so that those in the back seat could also have a good view. Finally, Aunt Lula declared that she could see the screen and the car engine stopped.

Stella stuck her face out the window of the car and took a deep breath. In the early season, the air was perfumed with the scent of the honeysuckle that grew in wide heaps along the entire length of fence that surrounded the parking area of the drive-in. This fence kept the suburb people, who hadn't paid to watch the movies, out, and the people in the cars, who'd all paid a dollar fifty per head, in.

Like always, the Starlight Theatre was scented with the world's greatest, freshly made popcorn and melt-in-your-mouth barbecue sandwiches. Her stepfather adjusted his window so that he could hang the metal speaker box by its hook atop the glass edge of the car's window.

Soon the evening light would dim and the luminous floating fireflies would lift and dip their way among the rows of cars. Stella's real dad had told her once that the fireflies only lasted just a little while and then they had to leave, but she didn't believe him. Nothing he ever said seemed to be true.

The late season of the drive-in meant the end of summer. School meant a box of new crayons and standing in front of the class to give up stories of personal adventures in show and tells. But she put those thoughts out of her mind. Early in her



Photo by Joel Kendall



family's visits to the drive-in, Stella had found the playground up next to the big screen. She would go there and ride the blue springed horses and take turns with the other kids, pushing the merry-go-round.

From the back seat, Stella noticed that Daddy Carl began to thumb through the remaining bills in his wallet. "Let's see here, five, six, seven. . ." Before he made it past eight, Stella's mother broke in, "Go ahead, tell us how much money you have, Carl."

"Looks like, fourteen dollars."

"Carl, put that up, we don't care about that right now."

"Well, you should. You couldn't buy all those things you like otherwise."

Stella's mother repositioned herself in the seat of the car and she spoke in a lowered tone. "You mean like food for the table, and clothes for our backs, Carl?"

Aunt Lula's voice interrupted, "I just love those good old fashioned movies, don't you? Sometimes I get so caught up, I cry." She said this in earnest. "I just can't help myself." A pregnant silence momentarily filled the late afternoon air of the green Chevy.

"Oh, I know," Stella's mother added, her own voice now sweet, reassuring. "It's wonderful when movies make you cry."

"Yeah, *The Mummy's Curse*." Daddy Carl leaned in to replace his wallet in his back pocket. "A real tear jerker."

"Well, Carl, what about *Gone with the Wind*?" Aunt Lula replied.

"Or, *The Creature From the Black Lagoon*." His voice, a measured rhythm, distinct. It was the same voice he had used when he thought Stella had done something wrong. "Now there's good movie making."

Stella had the door to the car half open as she said, "I'm going to ride the rides."

"Don't forget your sandals," her mother yelled as Stella shut the door to the car. The walk across

the gravel was liberating. She would play as long as she wanted, make friends, have them over to tea and ride the blue horses. Dust and squeaky hinges would entertain her until dusk. But this time, she would not ride the blue springed horses. Both horses were already taken by other children. Luckily, there was still room on the kid-propelled merry-go-round, and as it stopped to let off dizzy, sideways stepping passengers, she climbed on and held tight, while the big kids pushed everyone else. The world, everything turned round and round. She watched the sunlight of day as it slipped behind the honeysuckle covered fence. Stella turned and turned, lost within the fusion of night and day.

Soon an arrangement of car horns broke the silence. It was almost dark, almost time. With every second that passed the light seemed to fade. Near the entrance booth, cars were still rolling in. Somewhere in the slow-moving traffic could be heard the roar of teenage engines, the sound of a bottle crashing and isolated laughter. A few of the parked car owners switched on their lights and honked their horns to illustrate that it was time.

Stella caught a glimpse of the big screen as she rotated. It was an enormous collection of white painted plywood, each of identical size. Her stepfather had used plywood to work on the walls of their house. The big screen she guessed was about the same size as the brontosaurus she'd seen munching on trees in picture books. The creatures were always compared in scale with the tiny outline of a man. As she turned around and around, she caught a glimpse of the big screen as it began to change colors. Immense silent images seemed to move at random. Near the back of the fence that surrounded the drive-in, she could see the first gliding dances of lightening bugs and when the merry-go-round stopped for a passenger change, Stella leapt off to find her parents' car, pretending she was Robin running alongside Batman with his huge billowing cape rustling like the flopping cuffs of the shorts she wore. Finally, she reached the boxy green Chevy that Stella climbed into next.





Photo by Joel Kendall

"Anyway, you can imagine that all the time. . . ." Stella's mother finished up as Stella crawled into the car.

"Did I ever tell you how I saw the original showing of *Gone with the Wind*?" Lula obviously was changing the subject.

In the remaining light, Stella stared at her aunt's brown and mossy green eyes. Her aunt's face was a mixture of mouth and eye wrinkles combined with the irregular speckling of age spots on both her forehead and cheeks. Stella's mother had performed curler rites that afternoon on Aunt Lula's grey brown locks and what was normally a shaggy, neck-length cut had now become a hairsprayed mass of blossom-like curls.

Through the car's window, beyond her aunt's

hair, fireflies floated up then down in graceful slow motion. Her aunt turned to follow Stella's gaze, then took a small flask of her special medicine from her purse and leaned back to take a swallow. "Aren't they pretty?" her aunt's voice graveled.

"Where do they come from?" Stella asked.

"Out in the weeds," her stepfather mentioned from the front seat. He'd used his louder voice, to make sure he was heard above the sound of movie previews coming from the speaker next to him.

Lula raised her voice as well. "They only live for one night, did you know that, Carl?"

"That so?" Stella's stepfather answered above the sound of torpedoes exploding a battleship.

Aunt Lula pointed to two points of light that were blinking alternately. "See those two flying

together?" After they have..., and conscious of Stella's presence, Lula continued, "Well, after they mate, their lights fall off, and that's where their larva come from."

"Is that your bottle talking, Lula?" Daddy Carl's voice interrupted.

Stella scrunched her nose into a look of questioning disgust, "What's *larva* mean?"

"It's their secret, dear." Aunt Lula smiled and took another long sip from her flask.

"Stella, honey, now sit up and listen, the cartoon's coming on." Her mother's voice urged.

Stella hooked her arms over the front seat, resting her chin on the top edge of the stiff vinyl. She wondered what her parents had been discussing while she was at the playground.

Just past the rearview mirror, Woody Woodpecker crackled laughter through the air as Stella's father lowered the speaker volume. In the darkness of the back seat she wiggled her toes and felt the dust from the playground. It was a sensation that she didn't like and she tossed the rubber flip-flops off, losing them in the darkness of the floor-board.

A shadowy figure traversed close in front of the car and momentarily blocked part of the screen from view. It was a man with shoulder-length hair and a headband carrying an open box of Cokes and tubs of popcorn. Her stepfather honked the green Chevy's horn at the man, who made a "V" with his first two fingers, then continued walking. "Well the crazy son of a bitch!" her stepfather murmured.

"Carl!" Stella's mother countered.

"Well look how close he was to our car Edith."

"No manners." Aunt Lula grumbled. "Some people have no manners at all."

"These kids today, they think they got the world coming to 'em," her stepfather added.

Woody Woodpecker stuck his red tussled crest and smiling beak through the hole he'd just made in a piece of wood and performed his repetitive laugh. As the cartoon faded, a crackle and slither-

ing hiss was heard. The screen was lit, but blank, except for a few giant pieces of hairy-looking lint that were moving around in the top left of the screen. Car horns began honking randomly. Stella's mother and stepfather both exhaled as if they were trying to blow all of the air out of their lungs at once. As if to answer this non-verbal request, a bass fiddle melodically thumped as a still picture of sandwiches and crushed ice drinks appeared on the screen. The bass was joined by a hissing cymbal and a playful, rhythmic piano. "It's time to enjoy our taste-treat sensations." The still picture faded to a cartoon of sandwiches and drinks and candy bars holding hands. They danced, kicking legs to the music as they all revolved in a neat circle on the big screen. The music continued, but a photograph of a real sandwich replaced the dancing group. "Try our world famous, melt-in-your-mouth barbecue sandwiches." Next a crushed ice drink with a serving of onion rings appeared. "Or one of our delicious, refreshing ice cold Coca Colas, or what about those mouthwatering onion rings!" Stella wanted to try them all. Before the end of the intermission, Daddy Carl turned his head so that Stella could see the squared off silhouette of his eyeglasses. "Edith, you want something?"

"Oh, now you're going to spend some money?" Stella's mother queried.

"Come on, what do you want?"

Stella's mother turned away, staring off out the passenger side window.

"Lula?" Daddy Carl questioned.

"I'll take a popcorn and a small Tab."

"I want a barbecue sandwich," Stella said.

Stella's mother came out of her gaze, "Get just one barbecue sandwich for me and Stella to share and some Cokes."

"You want to go?" Daddy Carl offered to Stella in his most charming voice. Stella searched in the darkness below her feet to retrieve the dusty flip-flops she'd abandoned just minutes earlier.

Holding her hand with two of his fingers, Daddy Carl towered over her as they crunched





Photo by Joel Kendall

gravel on their way to the single small building on the theatre property. The refreshment building was a concrete structure painted white. It was lit with harsh yellow lights that made a constant, frantic, electric hum. Inside, was the sound of onion rings becoming crisp in hot oil and a surprise when the pizza oven timer went “ding.” A flowing mound of freshly made popcorn flavored the air.

A middle-aged man with a pink nose and face stood behind the counter. “Give me a box of those” her stepfather insisted. The man used his large, sun-dried hands to grab a giant box of chocolate covered raisins—her father’s favorite.

“Daddy,” Stella pointed at the world’s largest box of Hot Tamale candies, “can I get some of those too?”

“Those things?” There was a smile in her stepfather’s voice. “They’re too hot aren’t they?”

She gave him her most sincere and solemn oath that she really would eat those things, even if they did burn her mouth off.

Her stepfather led her back to the car and Stella wiggled into the vinyl seat. The smells of melted butter and warm barbecue intermingled in the air.

Stella was handed a half of a sandwich wrapped in shiny foil-like paper and told to, “Be careful.”

Daddy Carl reached up to the ceiling of the car and turned on the overhead light. He had his check book out, examining it, an obvious squint on his face.

“What are you doing?” Stella’s mother questioned in an irritated tone as she held half of the sandwich up to her mouth.

“I wrote a check earlier today and I didn’t write it down in my book.”

Stella’s mother reached to turn off the light on the ceiling of the car, and as she did, Daddy Carl grabbed her extended arm. They stared at each other in silence until Daddy Carl eventually gave in, first pushing his wife’s hand away, then reaching with his own hand to turn the light off.

The meat and bread of the sandwich seemed



to evaporate in Stella's mouth. She wiped her hands on her tee shirt and sipped through shaved ice to glean bubbles of sweetness. Aunt Lula munched popcorn and briefly sipped her Tab. Stella sat all the way back in her seat, then remembered the Hot Tamales.

She chewed the burning cinnamon and finished her Coke as the feature movie, *Blackbeard's Ghost*, began. By the time Blackbeard had materialized from the antique bed warmer, she could feel pressure in her bladder. "Mom, I gotta pee."

Her mother, by now a collage of shadows, got out and walked with Stella across the uneven gravel past the rear ends of Fords and Volkswagens to the backside of the yellow-lit snack shack.

Inside, it smelled of urine and cigarette butts. Stella held her breath as long as she could, then took a gulp of air through her mouth and hurried.

Once outside again, the air was much fresher than she had remembered. The stars, each magic speck of light, seemed to welcome her return to the world.

Back inside the car, Aunt Lula lit one of her Pall Mall Kings and the tip flashed. It settled to a steady ember. In the darkness of the car, Stella imagined that as her aunt moved the ember back out the window to flick, the discarded ember turned into a firefly and took flight across the sky. She wondered what her aunt had meant about the two fireflies they'd seen flying together. What could their secret possibly be?

Once, she remembered, she'd caught several of the slender bodied lightening bugs and sealed them inside a quart mason jar. She'd carefully punched holes in the top of the jar and had watched the bugs as they walked around, blinking. The next morning she had expected to find them, still blinking as brilliantly as ever, but instead, they'd been

lifeless. Each was on its back, its legs crooked in the air. Not a single one had survived.

Stella's eyelids became heavy and she propped her feet onto her aunt's lap and leaned back into a reclining position. Her aunt's head was tilted, leaning against the car door. Stella could see the straight outline of her aunt's nose and high, curved cheekbones. In the front seat, a shifting shadow of light and dark fell over the side of her mother's hair and face, and at the very top of Daddy Carl's head, she could see light move off the slicked back contours of his hair. Above her, she focused through the open window of the back seat. There were so many stars she couldn't count them. Bright and dim, single, like her mother's ring and clustered, like spilled baby powder. They each seemed to call to her. . .to know her. The ones that blinked especially. She wondered if the fireflies lived up there instead of in the weeds, or if the stars were really fireflies just blinking slower because they were resting. She wondered if Daddy Carl was going to go away like her real Daddy had. Stella closed her eyes and felt the warmth between the back of her head and the car's vinyl seat. It seemed only moments had passed when she heard the voice of the pirate yell out. Stella sat up just in time to catch a glimpse of the pirate stealing a football. Then she slowly sank back, eyes heavy with sleep, and rested her head on the car's seat once more. Clouds of gray filled her eyes. She floated through the darkness among thousands of stars and blinking fireflies. There were so many gliding around her as she floated among them. Their secret, she thought, must be that they live with the stars, and that's where they must go to sleep. Their silent glimmering lights floated around her, and distantly, she heard the old pirate's troubled voice, but this time, she did not need to open her eyes.



Edwin A. Nelms

by Sheryl L. Nelms

the quick flick of a smile
is still there

the curly hair still
coal black
at 67

the luminous brown
eyes softer now
mellowed
by the Valium

and the body
like a wool sweater
washed in hot water
shrunk
from six foot two
down to five foot four

bones
poke out
under his skin

his shriveled bottom
hangs in his slacks
like a limp
bean bag

brittle bone
cancer
has turned him
into a crisp cicada skin
ready to crunch
if

I hug him



Leaving Nothing Behind

by Brenda Black White

After the heat wave
when my cherished garden died
and many shrubs were lost
from lack of rain
including two lilac bushes
and a pink butterfly bush
and even a few trees, and there
was no beauty to beckon me outdoors;
no twining morning glories on the
birdhouse pole or lacy cardinal vine
trailing along the latticed deck,
no hydrangeas bobbing their heads or
elephant ears swaying in the breeze
or heady jasmine flowering beside
the porch.

Even the English ivy had withered
and fallen from the wall.
All was drab, barren and dried up.

I was not motivated to reestablish
a sanctuary of loveliness outdoors as
I'd done for years
to keep myself occupied
and distracted from indifference,
lack of love and warmth in the house.
I had no reason to stay.
So, I left,
taking nothing with me but the cat
and leaving nothing behind.



Photo by Joel Kendall



The Trouble with Impressions

by John Michael Cummings

Meeting Mark tested my courage, as if, after years of accomplishments, I stumbled upon a familiar person instantly remembering me as awkward and undisciplined, a person whom I had outgrown but had not outlived, so that seeing this person sunk me once again into the unstoppable dejection of adolescence. I backed from the display case where he stood with my wife, store manager, pointing at lit piles of candy-colored minerals almost always admired but rarely bought by tourists of Newport. Claire, happy as always to see me but not quite comfortable with two men at her side, introduced us with a clumsy nervousness obvious of a woman too intelligent for platitudes but not often too stoic for surprises. Her ungraceful reception of me, in the way she blushed and abandoned her conversation, embarrassed Mark, I noticed: My strolling into the store before he could taper his affectionate grin and before Claire could curb her natural appeal seemed as sudden and disruptive as an abrasive light poked into a dark, parked car. Still, my impression of him—a mawkish kid enamored with my vivacious but sensible wife—kept me uninterested in joining what appeared to be their dreamily juvenile chat, of sickly sensitive feelings and of foolishly idealistic principles, much like those cafeteria conversations after my figure drawing and sculpture classes in college.

My impression of Mark, even after I managed to move close enough to ignore his spraypainted jean jacket and black-fringed, calf-length moccasins and to notice his antsy, timidly boyish eyes, reminded me of when at his age, about 17, any girl who had happened to smile at me sent tremors down my skinny, hairless neck—sensations making me leery and surprisingly unfeeling of any other male nearby. That Mark looked foreign, having bronze skin and high soft cheekbones and leopard-black hair and eyebrows (later I learned he was half Apache, half German), only complicated his

life, I guessed. His heritage, which, because of his thick features, looked Hawaiian, seemed recently cumbersome to him. He appeared painfully Americanized by a local high school and, because of this cultural bout, alienated, both angry and proud of his exotic looks, looks jeopardized by a cultural crossover: his short spiked hair, falling flat in places; the pink blemishes on his cheeks, more from touching the skin than from pimples themselves; and the attempted mustache, spotty and faint.

My arrival, more than an hour earlier than when I usually walk Claire home from the store, muted them. They were like kids too shy to dance, but happy enough to sit on the dark bleachers and share contradictory findings of adult lives. Of Claire, I suddenly felt ambivalent. Several times she noticed my reluctance to join her and Mark in conversation, but coolly elected to continue without me. Four years younger than I, she sometimes surprised me with her lively teenage expressions.

When I moseyed behind the counter—knowing they, especially Mark, interpreted my movement as unsociable and perhaps sullen—to where she kept a few books on Newport architecture, Claire dutifully tried to include me: “Have you seen Mark’s drawings?” Now a hostess, she was straining with poise.

Reticent even with my wife and, in this case, unhelpful, I had already pegged Mark as defenselessly young, ancestrally and likely sexually disconcerted, and of course fond of Claire. So my noticing on the counter beside him a spiral-bound sketchbook with a silly, doodled cover only concluded my impression of him: He, like so many other males in my high school and even in my college art courses, sketched with angry, dense lines, rendering simple boxes and spheres made of black straw; he drew to free himself of conflict, not to discover dimension or atmosphere, but to release



typical post-adolescent angst through redoubling his warlike strokes. I myself had outlived this phase—or had I?

Tacking from a desktop computer graphics job during college, from four years of clustering pixels into formulaic presentation slides, to a less solitary position editing even more dry seminar videotapes had estranged me altogether from the real artists of the studio—from the piney odor of turpentine, from having messy fingertips rolled with

charcoal and india ink, from, simply put, pain-loving art. But I alone was the coward: Claire uncovered my old figure drawings whenever she poked through the attic on Saturdays and commented, “You know, you really should keep on drawing.”

Mark was. Flipping the pages of his sketchbook, the search flustering him, he showed me a vigorously compiled pastel drawing of a Pegasus, of which he said while closing the pad almost shamefully, “It’s not very good.”



Sketch by DJ Sutherlin

To myself, I agreed, but murmured something encouraging. Even had he looked comfortable with me—the stressful third person in the arrangement, interrupting his harmlessly intimate chat with Claire—I would have seen only the mythological nonsense of his sketch, his juvenile fascination with album-like art.

He added, looking at Claire, “I’m going to send it to a friend of mine back on the reservation.”

This word, reservation, used several times, highlighting his mumbling, briefly varied him from those student artists I had known in northern Virginia. His speech, staggered not from an insufficient control of English, but from the skittish climate of his age, sparkled with broken pitches and fluctuating ranges, a kind of rope rolling off the pulley. He seemed oddly constructed, of a racial blend too sensitive for me. And since I vainly saw myself more fortunate than he, I even considered asking him of his heritage, not to befriend him, but to reduce him before Claire to the teenage minority she seemed to overlook. I had all along hoped he would leave us, Claire and me, and had glared more than once at him when my wife grew uneasy of the male undercurrents, of my macho silence and his guarded swaggers among the display cases. I faintly admired him for not leaving, though; after all, I remained ignorably dissocial, even when Claire aligned us as fellow artists: Blame for my uneasiness shifted to her, for encouraging this lonely kid to come to her shop.

She had mentioned him at home, I remembered, still watching Mark watching her—she had spoken of him with the same superficial enthusiasm she showed for any stray dog or waving native interrupting her long winter hours at the store. He meanwhile preferred not to look at me and, after my staid comment about his drawing, tucked his sketchbook under his arm and shifted his body as if to ignore me, cleverly feinting a leave, I thought, nodding at the door to warn Claire of the tourists entering.

She greeted them promptly, like a house girl,

as they entered and stopped at the island display, quickly fixed on the illustriously lit watches with expandable bands capped with malachite and onyx slivers. The L-shaped glass counter where Mark and I now stood without her balanced us in our gloom like gunslingers at opposite ends of a street. He remained quiet and wary, occasionally glancing at Claire as if abandoned, mostly hiding his face in the display below him, pretending interest in the arched grouping of glittering indigo nodules, draped with beaded necklaces having pearly lusters and with sterling silver pendants inlaid with apricot moonstones and grape amethysts—the entire display something like wildly iridescent treasures lying on a chunky bed of dreamlike, blue volcanic ash. Vigilant and rude, I continued to observe him, curiously, more and more critical of him, hateful in fact, because not once had he even acknowledged my disapproval of him. To avoid me, he fidgeted among the shelves, following a graded display of chambered nautilus fossils.

Not particularly handsome, he soon became less threatening and more fragile. “Those stones are really cool,” I heard him say to my wife, who, after sending the tourists to a place on the wharf selling mostly costume jewelry, what they wanted, returned like a sprite to buffer us.

Mark left only once Claire had locked the shop door and started toward Historic Hill, holding my hand.

Walking, she and I returned to our paired behavior—to the twinned operation of our lives.

“He’s in high school, right?” I halfway asked, glancing over my shoulder and seeing him lighting a cigarette, a few steps down the walk.

She stopped, only now understanding my attitude toward him. “No honey, he’s a sonar operator on a frigate, at the Navy base.” She dropped my hand to punish me.

I tried to recover without shame, walking along, staring at the gritty brick walk, imagining a life of which I now had no impression.



Whiplash

by Marc Swan

If this were the hold of a sailing
ship on a rocky sea of wind
and change, I'd understand pitch-
black darkness of the room,
tom-tom beat of my heart to no
particular rhythm. A monitor
lights my way as I type these simple
words. She is asleep upstairs.
After the accident a month ago,
she rests most of the day, gets up,
feels good, pushes herself to do more,
falls back into bed, exhausted
by once minimal effort. She is here
when I go to work, when I come home
for lunch, when I return from work
she is on the patio, on the couch,
or in bed, resting. The neurologist
said the injury was like a sprained
ankle in her head. I try to imagine
muscle tissue surrounding my brain
wrenched to one side—whipped
this way and that. I want to take her
away from this new routine, a pattern
knitted out of boredom, fed on disuse,
fly on a big jet to a small place
with a cottage for two, river nearby,
salmon leaping out of running water.
We could walk in the woods, find
a grassy knoll for a picnic lunch, talk
like we haven't talked in a long long time.



Camp Houston

by Kathleen Johnson

Midsummer and hot as hell
in the farmhouse,
though the water cooler rattled
its noisy air across
my grandmother's kitchen,
sending the aroma of fried chicken
through all the rooms,
and on out
the lace-curtained windows.

Even hotter in the pickup,
but we'd take any excuse
to go to Camp Houston for
chocolate bars, or beef jerky, or Fritos,
while Grandad fueled the truck.

The Coca-Cola cooler waited,
a gleaming red treasure chest
against the back wall.
A wave of cold
met your face
as you lifted
the lid. Slick bottles
of Dr. Pepper, RC Cola, orange
and grape soda nested
in a glistening bed
of ice. God
that first swig
tasted good. So cold
you wanted to hold the bottle
against your flushed
cheek, then your sweating forehead.

Next to the cooler,
a tall wooden box topped with glass.
A sign just above read
Baby Rattlers.

On tiptoes
we cousins peered in
to see the pink and blue plastic
baby rattles.



We knew the joke,
but had to look
every time.

Twenty-five years later
I bring my husband, two children,
back to see the family farm—acres
of canyons and wheat fields,
barbed wire and rattlesnakes.

In the car
I silently count
years—twenty-two since
Grandad was committed
to the state hospital, twenty
since Grandma's fatal heart attack,
ten that Dad has lived
blind and brain-damaged by booze,
just three
since my younger cousin
was found hanging
from a necktie
in his city apartment.

On Highway 64, just west
of Freedom, we pass
White Horse Creek, then Red Horse Creek.
From the highway I see
the farm's red-dirt road rolling off
into pastureland
and up and over hills
like a piece of Christmas ribbon candy.

We drive on.

For miles I think
it must be over this hill, then the next,
until I finally spot Camp Houston,
and we stop for gas.

I urge my children to come in
and see the baby rattlers.

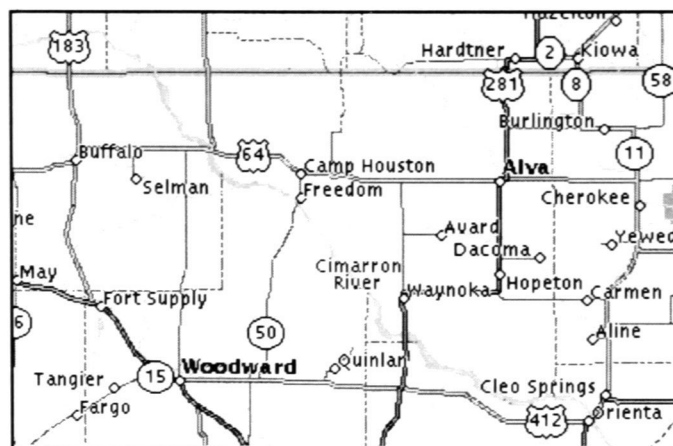


Photo by Joel Kendall



They are still there.

The kids look, to humor me,
but are not amused.

The woman behind the counter is not
that good-hearted-
but-rough-around-the-edges one
who used to call my dad
Junior when we stopped in
back then. This woman
smiles weakly, says
there are snakes
in a pit out back
if the kids want to see them.

We walk behind the building,
through sun-scorched weeds
crawling with red ants,
to a rectangular pit made of cement.

That familiar
dry ticking sound
as we step closer.

And deep down
in the shade,
in heavy coils around each other,
twelve western diamondbacks
hiss up at us
from dark corners,
flicking their forked tongues,
rattles straight up, fangs ready
to strike.



Mr. Lentiger's Microscopes

by Stepan Chapman

There was once a man named Mr. Lentiger. He lived in Milwaukee with his wife and two children. More than anything else, he loved to look through microscopes.

During the day he worked at a printing company. After work he'd drive to his apartment building and eat dinner with his family, saying little. Then he would vanish into his study, shut the door, and pursue his hobby, which was cellular botany.

Mr. Lentiger mail-ordered prepared slides from a catalog of educational supplies. His happiest hours were spent in scrutinizing stained and sectioned plant tissues under glass. He delighted in making meticulous drawings of the cellulose architectures preserved inside his boxes of clear rectangles.

Mr. Lentiger loved organization and detested all forms of confusion and clutter. His wife confused him constantly. His children mystified him. He therefore avoided his family as much as possible. He much preferred his stable silent world of stomatic vacuoles, microtubules, and rhodophytic chloroplasts.

Unfortunately for Mr. Lentiger, microscopes were murder on his eyes. He wore thick glasses, which corrected for astigmatism, and which he had to remove in order to stare down the barrels of his microscopes. His eye doctor had warned him repeatedly about doing close work with his glasses off, but he persisted. As a result, every few years he would return to his eye doctor's office for a new prescription and thicker lenses. A stubborn middle-aged man sacrificing his vision for his hobby.

Eventually, when he tried to renew his driver's license, the examiner tested his vision and classed him as legally blind.

"I told you this would happen," said his eye doctor.

"You were warned," said his wife.

Mr. Lentiger could have adjusted to retirement.

What depressed him was that he couldn't get his microscopes to focus. All his precious slides had turned to mush on him.

His wife got sick of having him moping around the apartment all day. She signed him up for a course of classes for the blind and drove him, five days a week, to the far side of Milwaukee. Mr. Lentiger met many other blind people. They soon dispelled all his romantic notions about the spiritual wisdom of the blind. Blind people were just as erratic and confusing as his family. Nonetheless, Mr. Lentiger did well in his classes because he enjoyed learning new skills.

He learned to memorize floor plans and how to count his steps when exploring unfamiliar public spaces. He learned to envision aerial photographs of city streets. He grasped his lessons quickly and retained them well. He learned to use a sonar cane that beeped at various pitches through an earphone. But he refused to adopt a seeing eye dog. Dogs were untidy and overemotional.

He bitterly missed his botanical slides. Some nights, he dreamed of them and woke up contemplating suicide.

His wife read him an article about artificial corneas. Mr. Lentiger wished that medical science would hurry up and perfect eye transplants.

As it turned out, new eyes weren't necessary. One April afternoon he roused himself from a nap in his armchair and discovered that his blindness had suddenly left him. His eyes were working better than ever before, working perfectly. Better than perfectly, in fact, because they now *magnified* by a power of one thousand. Mr. Lentiger had become a human microscope. He stumbled to his study and looked at a cross-section of some geranium roots. He could see every cell wall and all the fine structures of the cytoplasm. Then he stared at his fingertips for a while.

This sort of vision didn't help him to navigate,



of course. But he didn't care about that. He'd just spent a year learning to do without normal eyesight, and now he was used to it. And he was retired. His life was now ideal.

He wandered the cosmos of his apartment all day and half the night, just looking at fascinating things. Things like window sills, dust balls, drapes, his children's shoes, or scouring pads. He examined these things closely for hours. Sometimes he thought he could hear his eyes making tiny whirring sounds when they focused.

His wife tried to ignore him, even when he lay on the kitchen floor to watch the dust mites in the cupboard under the sink. She'd been ignoring him for years, but it was getting harder. Ignoring a man who lived in the same apartment was driving her to the brink of madness.

"Look at *that*," he'd say happily, gazing at the bathroom wallpaper.

Mr. Lentiger's children avoided him as usual. They'd never had a clue as to what made their father tick, and lately he hardly seemed human.

One balmy night in June, Mr. Lentiger lay in bed beside his wife and studied a crack in the ceiling, moving his gaze gradually along a groove as deep and as complex as the Grand Canyon. At midnight he dozed off. At two o'clock he fell into a dream.

In the dream he was a puffball spore, a dense but weightless sphere, just drifting through a rift in the puffball's brown shell, floating free.

As he dreamed, he sat up in bed. He stood up without waking, moved to his closet, and put on his clothes. *All* his clothes, everything in the closet, shirt after shirt, pants upon pants, coats over sweaters, until he was a ball of clothes with two bare feet.

Mr. Lentiger left the apartment and slowly drifted to the staircase, bouncing gracefully from wall to wall. Carried by the air currents, he gradually slid down the stairs and into the street.

Still dreaming that he was a spore, he wandered the lamplit streets. He was the only pedestrian to be seen. Cars drove by occasionally. Mr. Lentiger ignored them. He assumed that they were skin flakes

or luminous pollen grains or midges. He tumbled steadily along the sidewalk of Madison Street, watching for a good spot to sprout mycelia.

Just then, a freak accident ended Mr. Lentiger's life. A tank truck full of liquid oxygen was plodding north along Madison, making its weary way from the freeway to the industrial district. The driver had been on the road for thirty hours straight, fighting a losing battle with sleep deprivation, and he'd recently exhausted his supply of stimulants. Seeing a man rolling along the sidewalk, costumed as a spore, might have startled him into wakefulness. Unfortunately, he never noticed Mr. Lentiger. He fell asleep and slumped across his steering wheel. The truck turned right.

The cab of the truck plowed through the display window of an appliance store, a yard or so in front of Mr. Lentiger. Spinning slowly, shards of plate glass showered to the sidewalk and burst into sparkling clouds of particles. Mr. Lentiger's clothes protected him from the flying glass.

The truck's refrigeration tank rammed the cab, and the cab flattened against the building. The tank crumpled and split at its seams. A spreading cloudbank of white vapor washed over the street and engulfed Mr. Lentiger. In a matter of seconds, he was frozen solid. A grisly death.

But the colder his flesh, the faster his dreaming brain worked. Had a silverfish crashed into a termite egg? No. Something bigger. Had a steam boiler exploded? No. This vapor was too cold to be steam.

That termite egg was an appliance store! And he was a man! And this was Madison Street in Milwaukee! And he was dying! He tried to turn, to move his feet, to run home. He couldn't budge. Paralyzed and numb, he waited for a pain that never came.

In an agony of dread, he watched the roiling layers of milky vapor, billowing like leisurely clouds, never quite still. A minute went by. Five minutes. Nothing changed. The street was deathly silent. The cold was crushing out his breath. He couldn't cry out or turn his head.

Ten minutes. His body flattened like a pressed



flower. His mind, the only part of himself that he'd ever valued, seemed to have fallen off a cliff, seemed to be accelerating without end, toward an infinite velocity. He tried to close his eyes. They shut.

He fell to his knees. He scrambled to his feet again. He was free of the fog. He was somewhere else entirely.

He was standing on blue water, on the corrugated surface of some ocean, with no land in sight. He could move now. But the water was standing still, frozen in time. The sun was shining overhead. But the clouds weren't moving. Only him.

He thought he should look for dry land. He began to walk along the trough between two waves. One direction was as good as another. He walked for hour after hour.

Looking down at the water, he noticed something moving. He stooped over it and watched it. It was a nereis worm, a creature with spiny segments, meant for sand flats under shallow water. But this one was breathing air, creeping across the surface of the sea. Mr. Lentiger decided to follow it, in the hope that it knew where it was going.

Some time later, he found himself surrounded by worms. Some of them were as big as he was. And all were creeping in the same direction. They left him alone, so he went on walking among them.

He came to a nereis as big as a freight train. It was lying on its side, unmoving. At first he thought it was dead. But it had long gray threads trailing from the spines on its huge brown shell, and the threads were listlessly curling and uncurling themselves. Then Mr. Lentiger knew that the giant worm was dying from the sun. He began to walk around it, following its belly to its head.

The head was swollen and furrowed and pale gray, like a giant human brain. The furrows of the frontal lobes had the shape of a man's face. Mr. Lentiger walked closer. The face looked like *his* face.

"Are you a worm?" he asked it. "Or are you a brain and a spinal cord?"

"I'm dying," said the huge gray face.

"Yes, I thought so," said Mr. Lentiger. "Is there

anything I can do for you?"

The worm spoke again. "Get this *thing* off my back."

Mr. Lentiger walked to the far side of the worm. A steel microscope, half as big as the worm, was bolted to its carapace.

Mr. Lentiger climbed up the worm's back until he could reach one of the bolts. The bolt was bigger than him and rusty, but when he wrestled with the bolt head, it moved. He screwed it out. It fell to the surface of the sea. He unscrewed another. The worm sighed deeply.

He removed a third screw. The worm tried to right itself.

"Not yet!" Mr. Lentiger shouted. "I'm not done!"

The microscope fell from the worm's back, crushing Mr. Lentiger beneath it.

He woke up in his bed. His wife was shaking him.

"I had a dream," he told her.

"I could tell," she said.

He looked around the bedroom. His clothes were still in his closet.

"I can see," he said. "I'm not blind."

"Of course you aren't blind. You must have dreamed it."

"That's a relief. Where are my glasses?"

"Glasses? You've never worn glasses."

"No? What grade are the children in?"

His wife looked at him strangely. "Freshman and junior."

"They're in high school? That's terrible."

"Why is it terrible?"

"I hardly *know* them," he told her.

"That's true. You don't."

"I'm going to throw away my microscopes," he told her.

She laughed. "Good luck. You don't *have* any."

Mr. Lentiger settled back onto his pillow. "I'm glad that's settled."

His wife went back to sleep.

Tomorrow was another day.



Richmond

by H. Bruce McEver

Undeterred by over a century
of industrial progress since the War
the cold stone-cobbled James
runs through this city's heart.

The river floods the brick-clutter relics
of old cannon foundries, tumbled tobacco warehouses,
and wracked bridges, dams, and locks.
Now on the banks, modern glass towers taint pink
toward sunset and shadow Corinthian columned porticos.

It's charming and everywhere:

I negotiate with a landed banker whose family financed the Cause
or casually chat with an ex-Marine cabby back to the airport.
His great-granddaddy dug and manned those earthworks
strongholding and surrounding this sacred capital.

It even seems alive in the glimmering eyes
of the great generals' oils arrayed at the Commonwealth Club.
JEB Stuart, Stonewall, and Lee
whose stares of determination and damnation
glow like the end of the day
and secretly ember
in the bosom of the citizenry:

that certain, courteous,
soft-spoken southern character,
somewhat deceptive,
but capable of taking on vastly
superior forces
and sometimes
whipping them.



Song for the Coyote

by Virgil Suarez

Where do you go when the hillsides
bloom with brush fires? Where
do you come from in heat
of day or night, when stars
flint in the sky, themselves dying
out? Loner, trickster, gypsy
in this terrain of isolation, faint
is the breeze of surrender as it
rustles the new coat of hair.
Hunger gives you a bad name,
scavenger of house pets, a poodle
or Yorkie, cats on the prowl,
the hunter becomes the hunted.
The settlers of this land, yours
at one time, call it encroachment
on their rights, you call it daily
survival, even the small field mice
give up their lives for you.
No grub or worm is safe under
layers of leaves or underbrush.
At night you roam, outcast
against so much abandon. Your
name has lent those who cross
the needy, the desperate from one
landscape to another, a bad name.
No matter, when they come for you
again, you will be ready, this time
you will not be fooled by baited
traps or any other incantation,
you will survive, alone, triumphant.



One Summer after Aunt Martha Died

by Walt McDonald

Go reel a creel you'll never forget,
Uncle Oscar taught me, squinting
as he tied the fly—and don't brag,
no trophy trout to wave in friends' faces.
I envied Oscar's tools, his wide,

gnarled knuckles twisting thread so tight
I swore each lure could fly.
Turning it under the lamp, he growled
to the tied dry bait, Some buddies can't go
anymore, no matter how many twines

they've tied for trout you'll take.
Eat your sizzling fillets at dusk
under the moon by your campfire.
Beware of bears: hang scraps up high
tied tight in plastic, far downwind

from your pup tent. If sleep comes
easy and pleasing, you'll go back alone,
unless your wife likes to fish
and you don't have to go without her
for the taste of trout.

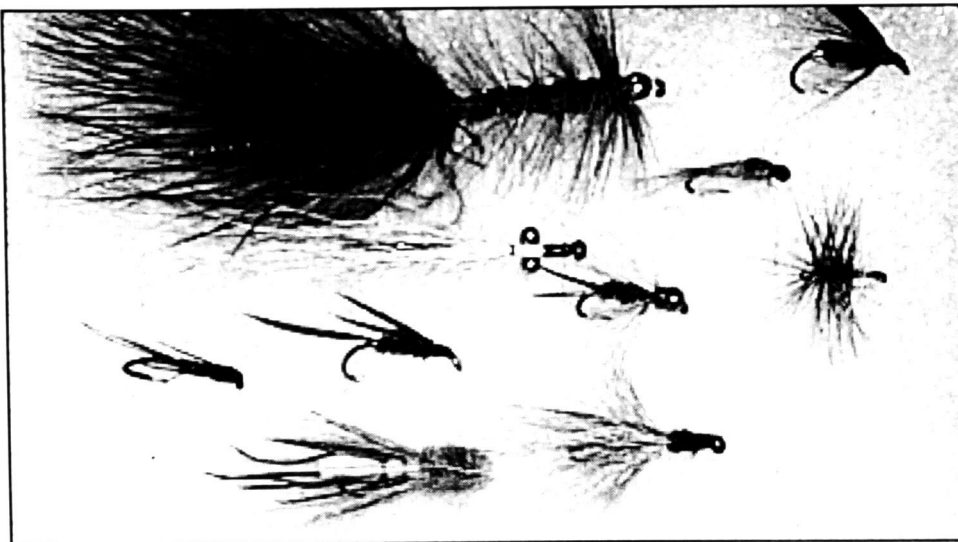


Photo by Joel Kendall



Relearning the Obvious

by Glenda Zumwalt

Over and over, we relearn the obvious:
Life is not fair. Love hurts and so too
loneliness. You can't go home again
and you can't leave.

At two a. m. in some condo or farm house
the lights are on. A commonplace no doubt
like the man walking the floor, draining
a bottle of whiskey, asking as though
it had never been asked before
Why? and *How?* asking as though he
could be answered asking while the woman
in a room upstairs sighs and turns
in her sleep, while the cat purrs
by the fire, while the oak outside
the window flames in darkness and drops
another leaf, while the world spins
patterns as predictable as gravity
and snowflake, asking while the clouds
drift across the moon and the wolves howl,
asking while the angels sigh.



Rondo

by Richard Dixon

He ran into them, after nearly twenty years. He always knew it would happen, that it was only a matter of time, in the town where the three of them lived. He didn't dread it, never dreaded it, but still did not relish a meeting, an encounter after nearly two decades of subconscious avoidance.

The three of them, he and this married couple, were now as they had been for a long time: strangers. They now had nothing in common, but he knew they would behave as if there were still common threads, as if they were still friends, and he did not want to go through that pretense. Maybe dread was lurking after all, like a shark swimming in silence, ever-watchful for his next meal. Hungry. Long ago, all relevant feelings had been flushed from him, and as far as the married couple concerned him, he was now threadbare.

The mutuality they once shared was that he had been married to her best friend and they had socialized on a regular basis, and gotten close, within the socially acceptable limits, he writing a heart-felt poem for their then-three-year-old son, and they had duly loved it. And he, sharing a keen interest in songwriting with the husband of his wife's best friend, whom he genuinely liked, a nice guy married to a social pretender.

Then, shockingly short-lived, his marriage had unraveled with the speed of someone's lifelong wishes coming to a sudden dead-end. Her dreams and desires had turned over, as lake water turns over in the late summer when the algae dies from lack of oxygen.

His then-wife had decided, as if out of the clear blue, that what he had to offer was not, after all, part of her long-range future plans. Those plans had changed dramatically, and now involved her becoming a latter-day saint and a mother to several children, and all of it the quicker the better. The marriage was over in three years, two really;

it had taken another ten months to work out the logistics—no attorneys for the divorce, the selling of the house and division of the proceeds, a decision on the damn dog. She had wasted no time, getting re-married within five months (the state law says a divorce isn't final for six months, but who's paying attention?), and moving to Australia where, at last count, she was a latter-day mother of four ... and counting.

The only common thread he now shared with these people, this married couple from the past, was that their younger children and his twelve-year-old son attended the same school, which is where he ran into them, as he (and his current wife) were leaving the building, during middle-school Open House Night. He was walking out as they were walking in, he recognized them in an instant from fifty feet away and, as soon as they saw him it took a few moments for their expressions to turn from fuzzy to clear, a few seconds for the masks of insincerity to drop and the fake smiles put into place.

He felt he had no choice except to stop and visit, but he also began to go through the tentative choreography that was already taking shape in his mind, a simple series of dance steps, the ultimate goal of which was to get the hell out of there. They exchanged pleasantries and information, and tried, futile as it was, to fill each other in on the last twenty years of their lives, and he already knew that was an impossibility, as close to without a purpose as, well, those several lonely years he had spent without a single word from them, those lonely years he had spent and they couldn't be *bothered*.

And now, what: encore time? Sorry, too much else going on in his life, he had a *life* now. He found himself stepping carefully around them, but slowly, trying to disengage from this discomfort. He found himself stepping slowly around them, smoothly, without being abrupt or rude, as if he were doing some kind of solitary, weird waltz, one that he'd



been doing his whole life. An odd thought: he used to enjoy being around these two people, but now he saw it for all the insincerities, charades, and superficial status-quos, he saw it for the veiled, improbable love-thing he used to have for his ex-wife, and all else be damned; he saw it for the doomed duet it had always been.

He saw an opening, made the first move away from them, and to his disbelief, it looked as if they

were doing the same. No fools they; they knew a short encounter when they saw one. He took a few more steps away, *gliding* now, like a country dancer, a little bit corny, but it was a graceful shuffle, bidding goodbyes and nice to see ya's. A graceful shuffle, almost a professional two-step, leading him out the front door, back to where time and distance came together, and there he danced.



Photo by Joel Kendall

Country Smells

by Richard D. Kahoe

I gulp the heady air
dripping dew-distilled pheromones
from prairie hay in windrows.
What mortal nose resists the lure
of fresh-cured hay,
but why a sole cliché,
when sundry country scents
can spice our rural days?

I can't resist to strip a skunk brush bough
and breathe the heavy hand,
yet know full-well my nose will pucker up
like green-persimmoned lips.



Photo by Joet Kendall

When evening breezes waft
the mark of skunk itself,
I hound-dog the compass
but lock the chicken house—
the coop whence city cousins curl
in olfactory disgust,
as I savor sour ammonia
(litter, dung and kitchen scraps)
brewing slow ambrosia
for next year's garden.

The tannin concentrate so rank
in virgin hickory shoots
(no wonder goats that love them also reek);
the swamp gas smell of crawfish bisque, no less;
the dank of summer woods
invoking rotting potatoes—
a smell for every season,
for every smell a reason
hid from alien noses.



Fort Steele

by W. Dale Nelson

No one is dressed in living history
here. A sign says few developments.
It is interesting because it is melancholy.
Cars from Kansas, cars from Maryland, turn tail.
Too far, this walk under the railroad tracks
to ruins. Where the bridge tender watched the one rail
he could see, a chain link fence warns: city property,
keep out. Beyond a rusted stove, the Platte
runs naked. Whistles blow. There is not enough money
for more, for history to make its statement.
Here, history is a ruined stove, is illness, boredom,
finally is death. A storm develops, moments
away. When we go back, our lives will be the same.
A sagebrush wind is blowing across time.

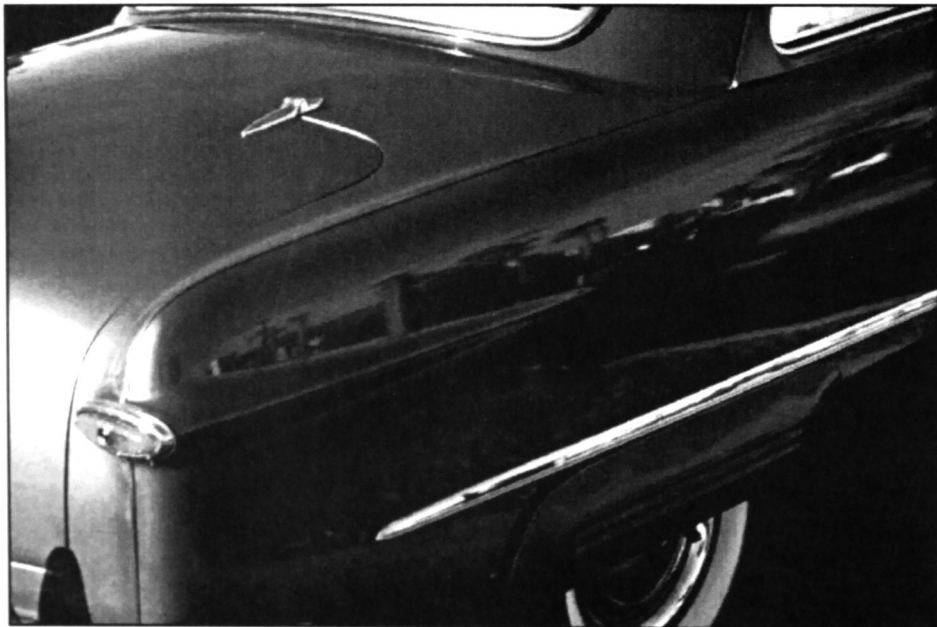


Photo by Neal Rue



The Wolf Underneath Me

by Aaron Worley

I decided to stay in Why on a whim. The only reason to reside in such a blip seemed to be the name. A collection of a couple dozen brittle and burnt adobe houses lay twenty-eight miles north of the Arizona-Mexico border, and its only service was a gas station where state highway 85 connected with 86. Anyone traveling to the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument had to pass through, but traffic was minimal. Stuck between Ajo and Schuchuli. That was Why.

Officially, Why had no places for rent, but when I asked about getting a place, Los, the daytime manager at the Phillips 66, mentioned the top half of the wolf house.

"What's the wolf house?" I inquired.

"The only two-story duplex in town," Los began. "Nobody lives in the top half. Folks don't care for the wolf."

"Who's the wolf?" I asked, picturing a burnt-out biker who had left his best days on the road decades ago.

"The wolf's not a who, he's a what. A few years ago, the hairy beast clawed a hole in the bottom of the door and has lived there ever since," he said wiping the counter with a stained wet rag. Los gave me a long look, eyeing my garage sale T-shirt and blue jeans. "I ain't got nothing against the animal, but I never really concern myself with stuff like that. As long as you leave it alone, you should have no trouble. Cheap place, too. Two hundred bucks, I think. Talk to Cabezo. He owns the place. He'll set you up real good."

"A wolf? Like a real wolf?" I asked, stunned by his nonchalant attitude.

"As real as they come. I wouldn't make a big deal about it. I hear the thing hardly comes out, except late at night."

Los gave me the fattest grin I'd ever seen, but I still ended up calling Cabezo. I needed a hiding place, and a do-nothing town like Why fit the bill.

Cabezo met me at the duplex. He reminded me of the yolk of a hardboiled egg. Thick, unappealing, moldy yellow, cooked. And a straw cowboy hat for character. The duplex struggled to stay upright with faded crumbling adobe, and the third stair going up to the second story was missing. Claw marks decorated the doors, the insides, a sunken mattress, a bathroom, stove, sink, and TV. Everything had a slashed appearance.

Cabezo acted like none of the marks existed, and he didn't ask for references, a deposit, or a lease.

"Forty bucks a week. Pay on Monday. You don't pay on Monday, you leave." That was the deal, and we didn't even shake on it. I just placed a twenty and two tens in his hand, and he gave me a key with no key ring.

As he turned to walk away, I built up the courage to ask the question. "What about the wolf?"

He stopped, put the money in his pocket and ran his hands over his rub-worn jeans. "What about him?"

I didn't know what about him. I didn't know anything. "Is it safe to live here?"

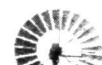
Cabezo smiled wider than Los did. "Oh sure. Why wouldn't it be? See you next Monday."

"What if I need you for something?"

"Then we'll take care of it on Monday," Cabezo said and was gone before I could think of another question he wouldn't really answer.

I didn't see the wolf during the first three weeks at the duplex, but aside from the occasional trips to Ajo for food and beer, I didn't see much of anything. It was late May, and the days already reached up into the high 90s in southwestern Arizona. Hiding weather.

My time was spent sweating, swearing, and sleeping. Trying to flush my existence away along with my urine. The reasons for my gloom were



traditional if not cliché. Bad sex, bad jobs, bad aspirations, bad sins. If it wasn't one, it was the other. If it wasn't any of them, it was nothing, and nothing was worse than all the problems put together. I realized I had trapped myself in bad routines and began to drive. City to town, village to borough, hellhole to shit heap. Every place advertised something and delivered nothing. By the time I reached Why, it was obvious that the desert dot didn't offer a thing, but at least I knew it.

I occasionally heard rustling from downstairs, but nothing that sounded like a wolf. The hole in the downstairs front door was slashed open like Los said with claw marks and tracks littering the dirt. Other than that, I didn't do much investigating. The wolf talk seemed like a hokey carnival midway attraction that lost its appeal long ago.

Sleeping half the day, hiding during the afternoons, making an appearance outside at sunset. The routine I adapted was almost too easy. Invisibility wasn't a power for super heroes. It just involved keeping atypical habits. Days went by out of sight. Nights went by in the dark. Cabezo came by on Mondays.

Forty dollars. For forty dollars a week, I bought solitude, isolation, and madness. The four walls kept my insanity from escaping, and I fed into the lingering pathos more with each passing week. I had less than eight hundred dollars left from my last job of selling kitchen knife sets that would inevitably break within a year. A legitimate con man. What was frightening was how good I was at selling junk. I had the knack of compelling consumers to believe the lie.

Very few people actually needed new kitchen knives, but I made them assume they did. Looking them in the eye without flinching while slicing flimsy sharp metal through much weaker metal. That's the only proof they wanted. I sold 546 sets of knives in the span of just a few months. 546 lies, and not one complaint. Not one.

I hoped the Arizona heat would evaporate the worthlessness out of me, but at best, it just slowed

my thinking. I went hours without a thought, and when one came, it was too disgusting to dwell on for long. Why was doing me no good, but at least, I was doing no bad in it. It was my only comfort, but a comfort nonetheless.

I wasn't ready for the wolf when I finally saw him, but then again, I had no idea how to prepare myself. On the upstairs porch, I had settled into a lawn chair I'd found on the lot when the scratching and whining started. None of my business, I thought as I popped open a Dos Equis off the side of the rusting arm rail. As I shifted in the chair, one of the straps snapped, and the entire chair crumpled as the aluminum frame tried to hold my weight against the upstairs cement porch. The chair lost.

My mouth opened to scream a reflexive blasphemous curse but no words came out. Instead, a slender coyote bolted messily into my view from underneath, stopped, and turned around to look at me. It hobbled around on a gimpy front left paw and quivered with climactic fear. It took its gaze off me and concentrated on the room from which it came. Never looking in my direction again. Only at the wolf.

The first part of the wolf I noticed was his neck. He could have been mistaken for a German Shepherd or a desert husky if it wasn't for his neck. Full, flexed and complete. It was bigger than his head.

Then came the walk. Each paw was purposefully slow, letting the coyote know exactly where he was going. Almost but never dragging. Almost but never slouching. Almost but never ambiguous. He rounded the smaller beast. A five foot animal circling a three foot animal. Unfair, unsportsmanlike, natural. Upon the third pass, the coyote began to yelp and whine. Twisting and jerking its head as if it could twitch its way to a better place. It couldn't.

Halfway around the fourth pass during an intensely wretched moan from the coyote, the wolf



leaped. His five feet of mass became seven. Ears pinned back and mouth opened to become a neck with teeth. The coyote opened its mouth in return, but it was in vain. Its eyes fixated on a final spot and froze. The neck of the wolf held up the little body while his teeth disappeared into the spine of the creature. After a few shakes to be certain, the wolf let go of the refuse as it tumbled to the dirt. The coyote died with its mouth open.

I didn't mean to make a sound. I meant to be frozen just like in hide-and-go-seek. I dropped my beer.

The glass didn't break, but the bottle chimed off key upon hitting the ground. The beer spilled out in a fizzled frenzy. Bubbling, buzzing and shaking itself into an overspill. The liquid ran into a sunken section of the porch making a fresh beer puddle where no moisture had been for weeks. That's when his gaze rose up to my position.

Brown eyes. Riotous brown eyes staring with control but unrestrained. I couldn't look away, but I didn't want to stare. The beast was smaller than me. At best, he was eighty pounds, but that neck, the eyes, those teeth. Stuck in my broken heap of a chair, I had less of a chance than the coyote did to escape.

The wolf's head dipped a hint as he began to walk toward the stairs. He skipped the missing step as if there had never been one. He had been upstairs plenty.

It was too late to bolt for the door. Maybe if I had run when the brown and white predator first caught sight of me, I could have gotten inside. But I hadn't. I didn't. I sat there like a conscientious objector on a battlefield. An idiot in the wrong place proving nothing.

The wolf reached the top step and stalked around behind me, intentionally missing the beer puddle. I couldn't see him anymore, but I knew exactly where he was. The coarse pads pressing against the cement, the heavy breathing tumbling out in steady pants, and the eyes sticking to the back of my head. I heard his eyes.

I had the urge to twist and whine like the coyote did for a moment, but just for a moment. A bizarre cockiness shot into my consciousness, and I didn't care anymore. To hell with it, I screamed in my head. Why shouldn't my life end in a town called Why? Who the hell rents a room with a wolf living underneath them? The story might even make the regional paper, or maybe Los would tell tourists about the latest victim at the wolf house. I'd be part of a legend, or at least a small town folk tale. People have left this world contributing less. I anticipated the first snap with malevolent intentions and leaned back.

But the bite never came. The wolf came back into view near the puddle of spilled beer, gave me a quick glance, and lapped up the little bit of the liquid that hadn't yet soaked through the cement.

This amused me, and I couldn't help but grin. I said one of those jokes. One of those crass, insulting, funny to no one but myself jokes, and I said it out loud.

"You want a bowl to go with that wet pavement?" I chuckled to myself for a second until the wolf looked up.

"No, but if you can keep the beer in the bottle, I'll take one."

For a minute, I sat like an invalid.

Did the wolf actually speak? Where did that grumble of an answer come from? I hadn't lived in the heat that long.

I leaned over to the wolf that sat down next to me, and he actually looked like a guy who'd just ordered a beer. Slacked, distant, waiting. I got up and went inside. I grabbed a Dos Equis and stared at the refrigerator. What the hell was I doing? Didn't that neck with teeth just kill another animal? Isn't he just sitting outside my door? Nothing made sense, or rather, not even nothing made sense. Given the circumstances, I did what I considered to be the most logical choice. I grabbed another beer.

Walking back outside, I caught a glimpse of the wolf as he peered off into the outskirts of an



outs skirt town. The mahogany coat streaked with white and gray patches gave it a distinguished and mature appearance. The fat bushy tail sat motionless. The wolf turned and looked at me. Distant from only a couple yards away.

My cocky mood swelled again, and I kicked the broken lawn chair to the side of the upstairs porch. I popped the tops of the beer on the rail and set one in front of the wolf. I hardly looked at him. I didn't want to see his reaction. Maybe he didn't say anything. Maybe this was all in my head. Maybe it didn't matter what was the truth.

Squatting cross-legged, I peered down at the coyote. No teeth marks appeared on its neck, the coat was stained red underneath its front legs and its mouth forever open. It was as good a death pose as any.

I could hear the wolf drinking, but I didn't turn my head. I just stared at the corpse of his prey.

"What do you do when the devil gives you a free beer?"

The words came from next to me.

"I don't know," I answered not looking over.

"You drink it. It's a free beer. Who cares who

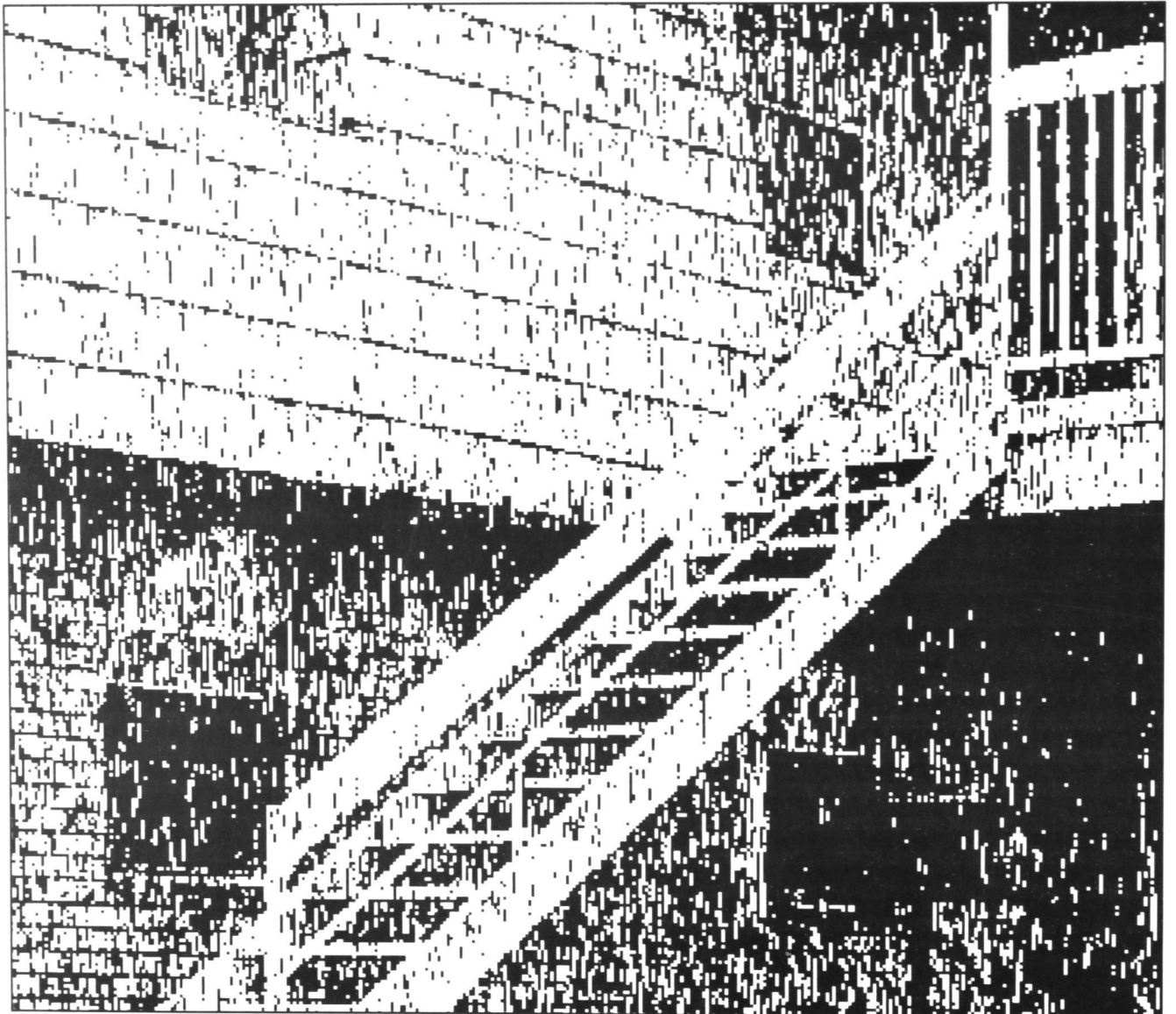


Photo by Joel Kendall

gave it to you, no?"

A smirk crept up my face. I didn't want to smile, but the line merited a reaction. I looked over to meet his brown eyes and mouth of teeth panting rhythmically to resemble laughter.

"Yeah," I snickered. "I guess so."

Silence and drinking controlled our conversation for the next few minutes.

"So what the hell just happened?" I asked, tired of listening to the unsaid words in my head.

"The nature of things."

"That's it?" I asked turning to face him.

"That's it," he answered staring at the coyote.

"There has to be more."

"There is, but that's what it all comes down to. She wanted my help, and that's the best I could do for her."

"Her?"

"She was crazy for coming to me anyway," the wolf continued. "Go see the wolf in Why. He can help. A lot of good I do them."

"You killed her to help her?"

"It would appear so. I did the best for all involved including me, but what's all this jabber for? What's your story?"

I didn't know what say, but I didn't want to say that I didn't know what to say.

"Madness," I blurted out.

The wolf's head tilted as if I actually surprised him.

"You want my help?" he asked.

"No."

"Then you're not that crazy, no?" the wolf said panting laughter. He stretched his back, pulling his head down between his front legs. "Come by sometime. Pay you back for the beer."

The wolf strutted down the stairs and underneath my porch. I grabbed the empty bottles and went back to get a new one for myself. By the time I came back out, the coyote and the wolf were gone.

I didn't visit the wolf right away. Every day, I woke up thinking I would stroll down to the door,

knock on it like a cordial neighbor, and exchange proper social pleasantries. I came close a few times, and even went so far as to stand in front of the battered front door. It was actually an interior closet door, but it had been forced to take on more responsibility than intended. Out of place like everything else, but it fit on the hinges.

The one thought that shriveled up my confidence every time was that I wasn't stopping by to see a person. The wolf was an animal. A predator. A beast so dangerous that ranchers and home owners had killed out most of the species. How does a person greet a wolf without a gun? Why would somebody visit a wolf and expect him to talk back? What the hell was I contemplating?

When the last question popped into my head, I decided to ignore the wolf and go back to my solitude. Of course, I never did stop thinking about the wolf. He was always there. When I woke up, he was under me. When I left town for groceries and beer, he was waiting when I returned. When I drifted off into a drunken sleep, he was in my dreams. When I woke up, he was under me. Back to where I was, and I hadn't gone very far.

Cabezo came by on the following Monday. At least, it was Monday as far as I knew. Every week, it was the same routine. Cabezo would intentionally thump up the stairs and open the door without knocking. He had a backwards way of announcing his presence.

"Forty dollars," he said holding out his stubby burnt hand.

If I gave him the money, he would be gone before I could say anything. This time, I held on to my two twenties.

"I saw him this week," I said with wide eyes and a twitching nod.

"Saw who?" he answered putting his hand down but keeping his eyes on the money.

"What do you mean 'Saw who?' Who do you think I saw?"

Cabezo shrugged his shoulders, looking bored with such a long conversation.



"The wolf! I saw the wolf. Who do you think I saw?"

"I don't know," he mumbled like the kid in the back corner of a classroom. "People see lots of things. Some see angels, some see devils, some see rattlesnakes, some see—"

"The wolf. I saw the wolf downstairs. You know? The wolf downstairs. That wolf? Ring a bell?"

"Oh sure," he nodded unimpressed. "What about him?"

I wanted to grab his stocky dazed body and shake it like the quarter slots until I got a prize. Instead, I paced back and forth on an imaginary four foot line.

"What about him?" I gasped. "Exactly. That's exactly right. What about him? Nothing! Right? There's nothing about him, huh?"

Cabezo shrugged and nodded, eyeing the money.

"Fine," I yelled. "Just forget it."

I grabbed his hand and slapped the forty dollars in it. I didn't realize what I had done until he was thumping down the steps.

"Wait," I yelled and stumbled my way outside. The sunlight blinded me as I lunged out for the first time that day. I couldn't see Cabezo, but I heard him skip the missing step. When my vision returned, Cabezo stood fifteen feet away from the duplex looking at me.

"He talked to me," I said with as much control as I could control.

"Oh yeah?" he said almost interested.

"Yeah," I said feeling I'd finally said something of importance.

"Okay," he said flatly. "See you next Monday."

Cabezo walked away into the sun, and I crawled back into my upstairs hole.

No one cared. No one cared about the wolf. No one cared about the guy who lived above the wolf.

Everyone had their own lives to exhaust. Credit card debts to expand, abusive relationships to complain about but never sever, arrogance and self-

consciousness to constantly battle their interests. Everyone had their own wolf stories to fill the lulls of conversations.

Even Cabezo cared more about his forty dollar pay off, and I ran out of reasons to avoid a downstairs visit.

Armed with a six pack of Dos Equis, I walked down and stared at the hole at the bottom of the door. It was a two foot gap where the wolf had clawed and ripped an opening on the left side under the knob. I knocked hard on the torn frame, and rustling came from inside.

"It's open," the voice called from inside.

I pushed open the door to meet a stench I'd only faintly smelled from upstairs. It smelt of blood. Old blood. Dead blood. My body convulsed as if it was going to vomit but relaxed after the initial waft.

The downstairs had no lights but I could tell it had the same dimensions as my place. The same cheap brown and orange carpet lay on the floor ripped up in several places.

I couldn't see the wolf, but I knew he sat in the far corner. I squatted near the door to be close to the light.

"Brought me a gift?" he said from the opposite end of the room. "I thought I still owed you.

"I felt like drinking with someone," I said still trying to appear aloof. "I figured you'd be up for a beer or two."

"That why you came?" he asked with a hint of skepticism. "You've been drinking just fine with yourself. You sure it's not to talk to someone about the wolf?"

I suddenly realized he could easily hear the conversation I'd had with Cabezo earlier. I slumped in pain, shedding off the casual stance I'd attempted.

"I just don't understand," I started. "I don't understand any of this."

"What do you want to know?"

What did I want to know? I wanted to know everything. Everything about everything. I



wanted to have no questions. I wanted to know why it was all the way it was, and why it didn't matter.

"Where did you come from?" I blurted out.

"Mexico."

"Why did you come here?"

"Because it's not Mexico."

"How are you able to talk to me?"

"By accident."

"That's it?"

"There's more to the story, but that's the main point."

"Do you have a name?"

"No. Don't need one," the wolf said flatly without interest. "Okay, my turn."

"Your turn for what?"

"You're not the only one who gets to ask questions."

It seemed like a reasonable request although I hadn't considered that a wolf would wonder about things.

"Okay, ask away."

"Where did you come from?"

"All over."

"Why did you come here?"

"It's not all over," I answered playing his game.

"How are you able to talk to me?"

I stopped the game with silence. I didn't know. I really didn't know the answer.

"Do you have a name?" it asked realizing no answer was coming for the previous question.

A name. I had a name, but I hadn't used it in weeks. Cabezo never asked for my name. Only my money. I hadn't told anyone my name since coming to Why. Why? I really didn't know why.

"Storm," I said almost embarrassed.

"Storm? That a funny name, no? Why are you called that?"

"I was born during a thunderstorm, so that's what my parents named me."

"Pretty heavy burden to carry on the name of just one day," it responded with a calm gruffness.

The wolf spoke English fine although his

words, at best, came out as a friendly snarl. If he wasn't speaking my language, I would have interpreted the tone as hostile, but everything he said had a harsh bite to it.

"Well, that was the day of my birth. That's a pretty important day. To me."

The wolf panted its laughter. "Always making a big deal out of something small. What if it hadn't been raining when you were born? Would your name be No Storm?"

"I don't think you understand," I snapped, feeling a little defensive. "My kind like to remember the days of our past. Our special days."

"Your kind, huh?" he grunted. "You want to know about your kind?"

"I don't now."

"Too late," he retorted and stood up pacing back and forth. "Give me one of those beers."

I walked outside into the sun and popped the two bottles open on the railing by the stairs. The wolf hid in the dark, but his eyes gave him away. I set the bottle in front of him and returned to my seat by the door.

"I see you," he began. "Even when you don't think anyone can, I see you. You sit in your problems, pretending things aren't your fault, blaming everyone else for your troubles. You drink yourself to blindness and blame the alcohol for not being able to see. Nothing's your fault. It's somebody else's, no?"

"What about it?"

The wolf leaned over with the brown bottle between his paws coercing the liquid into his mouth. "That's your kind. Always trying to blame other people, trying to fix other people's problems, trying not think about your own failings."

"That's easy for you to say. You're a wolf."

"Mexican Wolf," he clarified

"Okay, a Mexican Wolf. You don't have to worry about the things my kind has to worry about. There are expectations, ambition, corruption, competition."

"Lots of shun words, no? So what do you re-



ally want?"

It was the question I'd asked myself constantly since arriving in Why. It was why I ran away from the knives, and the whores, and the money. It was why I sat in the doorway of wolf's half of a duplex.

"You want me to tell you, don't you?" the wolf huffed.

"Do you know?"

"Of course. It's not so hard when looking at it from the outside."

"What, then? What do I really want?" I asked with a dose of skepticism.

"You want what you cannot see."

The words hung on me like a dried sweat. The fortuneteller had summed me up with a vague open-ended remark.

"That's it? That's all you have to say?"

"I could say it a different way."

"Then say it a different way," I snapped back almost shouting.

"You don't like the world. You don't like yourself in the world. Always thinking there's some place to make sense of it all. Always disappointed when every new destination offers a new set of worries to replace the old ones. You want a dream. An existence that has never existed."

My anger became overpowered by embarrassment. I tried to hide inside myself. Throw up a wall. Shut out the words. But they came crashing on my head and drenched in my veins and arteries. The words were in me, and I couldn't get them out.

"It hurts, no?" the wolf said after what seemed to be an hour. "You seem to be taking it better than the wolf rat."

"Wolf rat?"

"Yeah, the wolf rat you saw me kill."

"Oh, the coyote."

"I call them wolf rats," he explained. "Always wanting to be more than they are."

"So what happened?"

"Came to me wanting help. She had been shot in the chest and was going to die. She knew about

the wolf in Why and stumbled in bleeding and crying. I said I would kill it quickly, but she didn't want to accept it. Ran out with nowhere to go, but I did what I promised."

"That's cold."

"But it was real," he retorted. "Or was it?"

"What do you mean? Of course, it was real. I saw it."

"So you did. So you did."

"Are you saying it wasn't?"

"I'm not ever going to say that, and it will never matter," he huffed. "Truth and lies aren't important. All that matters is if you believe."

I sat quietly for a few moments. I hadn't touched my beer. For the first time in weeks, I didn't want to drink.

"You want to finish this?" I asked holding the Dos Equis out into the shadows.

"That depends," the wolf grunted. "Do you need it?"

"No, go ahead. I've got to get going."

"You have somewhere to go?"

"Yeah. I've got to go on."

"It's better than going off, no?" the wolf laughed as he walked over and bit the top of the bottle and guzzled the beer in three gulps down its massive neck.

Although I could hardly see him, I didn't want to look at the wolf anymore. I didn't want to believe in him anymore. I had to go, and he had to stay. There was nothing more to say, so I nodded to the wolf silently and crawled back upstairs. It was amazing how similar the two stories of the duplex were. Parallel.

In my half, I noticed the bottles everywhere. On the floor, in the sink, behind the toilet, on my sunken mattress. Had they always been there? I hadn't realized there were so many.

I picked up a brown bottle and stared through the hole. Small drips of liquid backwash dribbled at the bottom, but there was more. I saw the seventeen year old runaway girl I'd given a lift to Dayton just so I could get a quick poke. Although I



made her smile during the ride, she was crying in the bottle. I heaved it at the corner of the wall, and the glass shattered into glittering jagged shards.

I picked up another bottle near the door. It had the face of a guy I'd conned into buying four sets of knives. He thought I was the most honest and up front salesman he'd ever met. We smiled at each other when he bought the knives, but now he peered back at me in disappointment. The bottle busted into more pieces than the first I threw.

Every bottle had a face. Every face had a look. Every look had a purpose. The cook I swindled out of a meal, the friend I abandoned because he'd contracted AIDS from humping whatever he saw, girls who hated me and I loved, girls who loved me and I hated, my childhood minister, the kid I beat up in sixth grade to impress a bully, my mother, the bastard I let rape my sister, the man I strangled over a bathroom stall. Faces upon faces. Sins upon sins. Bottles upon bottles.

I kept heaving, and the bottles kept smashing. I couldn't stop grabbing them. What face would be in the next one? How many people could I destroy?

"Who's in the next one?" I howled. "Who's next? Who else has a problem? Who else wants a piece? Who else?"

I peered down to the bottom of every bottle, and they never depleted. Always another face, always another bottle. It would never stop. It could never stop. Until it finally did.

I don't know where the week went. For all I know, it may have never taken place at all, but I heard Cabezo stomping up the stairs. I lay on the ground when he came in. Gashes covered my body. Some had healed over, some bled slowly and quietly. Glass shards flickered in waves across the room. A few pieces still stuck in my body, but they were only a few knives.

Cabezo stood in the doorway, and for the first time, he was utterly dumbfounded.

"Is it Monday again already?" I said casually pulling glass out of my arms.

Cabezo composed himself in the blink of an eye. "Forty dollars."

I shook my head negatively. "Not this time. I'm on my way."

"You leave today then," he said gruffly.

"You got it," I agreed.

He turned around to leave, but he stayed where he was. "You okay?" he said with a hint of compassion.

"Good as new," I mocked.

"What happened?"

What had happened? I didn't think I'd ever be able to explain it to him. Or anyone. Then, the answer came.

"The wolf got me," I said with a bloody grin.

"Yeah?" Cabezo sympathized. "You got to watch out for the wolf. He'll sneak up on you."

"I know," I nodded. "I know."

Cabezo walked through the shard-covered floor and stuck his hand out. I shook it. He turned around and left my life without my money in his hand.

Packing took three minutes. I could have left in three minutes anytime I wanted, but I hadn't until now. Clothes stuffed in a duffel bag, bread and mustard pulled from the refrigerator, nothing else to be done. The shattered glass shimmered in the Arizona summer sun like fire burning up dirt.

I stumbled down the stairs trying to keep the rest of my blood inside of me, and I stopped by downstairs to check on the wolf. I stuck my head in the open door, adjusting my eyes to the darkness of the room. My eyes scanned the dim corners looking for any activity in the shadows. Nothing moved.

I thought about going inside or calling out to the wolf, but I didn't. If it was still in there, it didn't want to be found. If it was gone, I didn't want to know.

I left Why not knowing where I was going. The cuts stung me from all over, and my head and body functioned poorly together with the loss of blood. Waking nightmares danced behind my eyes about all the demons I'd looked in the eye and smashed. But it didn't matter. I was once again an existence existing.



Washing Machine Notes

by Roy Rasera

Today it is time to do laundry
My clothes are gathered together
Separated darks, lights, whites
Moving towards the machine
I raise the lid to begin the chore
and catch my breath

There you are
Balanced on the central post
Encased in a yellow envelope
Sending my senses spinning
Like so many unbalanced tumble dryers

What a joy to know that you are thinking of me
Even during the mundane actions of daily existence
Just reading your words pulls me apart
And rebuilds me, a better man

My time with you was as an iron,
pressed on my crumpled life,
burning and smoothing
heating and soothing
Inhibitions and insecurities carried
away in billows of steam
And I, more connected and directed
preened for pleasure
dressed as if blessed
Clasp your thoughts to my heart

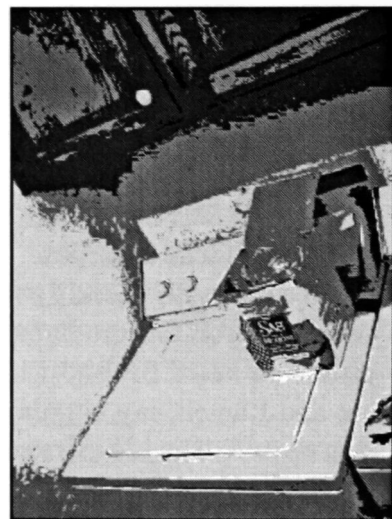


Photo by Joel Kendall



Fish

by Richard Fein

Fish in the air,
seemingly
over, under,
at times eclipsing, at times passing through—
human heads.
A roomful of busy jaws
at Ling's South China Sea restaurant,
one humongous tank lit by a long neon,
and behind it is one huge room lit by many neons.
Fish food floats pell-mell and is gobbled,
while beyond, diners hunch over their plates.
A vista filled with unsated appetites.
Some fish engulf human faces,
an illusion created by
two worlds aligned before the eye,
a question of proper perspective.
Four hundred million years of competing hungers
evolved into this clear vision
here at Ling's, which is so distant
from the South China Sea.
But I didn't come here for a proper perspective,
or to see the unrefracted light pass through two worlds,
one now, one long ago, and the distance of time between.
No, I came here for the specialty of the house
which is, of course, . . .



Traveling by Train from Denver to New York, Sophia Starling Thinks of the Departure of John Sprockett

by Robert Cooperman

He pivoted smart as a corporal on parade
and marched into the glossy Denver noon,
my heart screaming for him,
even as I knew I could say, do, nothing,
people everywhere, thinking me insane
if I were to run after him, beg him
to brave the banalities of England with me.

This train is haunted by his ghost:
for once, I understand his demons.
I could smash the harmless little man—
a drummer of ladies' shoes and hose—
who sits reading a dime novel
about a make-believe gunfighter.
I want to rip the cheap pages and shout,
"My real gunman can put six bullets
through the eye of a coyote,
drink fifty Irishmen into banshee oblivion,
and recite poetry like a bard."
He'd change cars, alert the conductor
to "the dangerous female back yonder."

I tell myself the miles will obliterate
the scars I came to love, Colorado impossible for me,
John Sprockett no one to spend a life with:
one night of drunkenness warned me
he was primed for violence like a bear-trap,
only his superstitions for the softer sex
kept him from ripping me apart.



Yet an imp would pull the emergency cord
and lunge from the train back to Denver,
find him drunk, dangerous as a wounded grizzly.
One glare from me would sober him,
or so I'd like to believe.
That little commercial traveler looks up.
"Ever read this one, Ma'am?"
a tale told for idiots of western courage.
"Only George Eliot," ice enough in my voice
to freeze the air bubbles of sweaty lava
cascading down his pock-marked face.



Sophia Starling, Aboard the Britannia, Bound from New York to London, June, 1874

by Robert Cooperman

My heart crashed like a chandelier
when I boarded the train from Denver:
Mr. Sprockett had stalked off,
a beautiful cougar impatient to kill,
leaving me so alone in that depot
I might have been drifting
on a raft in the middle of a dead-calm ocean.
But the dusty, slow continent,
the boasts of commercial travelers,
their endless card games and oaths
and mud-slides of spat tobacco—
made me long for an English gentleman,
for whom “Land” meant not acreage,
but tramping in Wordsworth’s Lake District,
for whom pistols are not the sole arbiter of taste,
nor whiskey the only source of entertainment.

I can only imagine what my sister—
a minister’s wife and spiritual equal—
would have thought of Mr. Sprockett;
the children he’d entrance with tales
of gunfights, melees with bears,
flights from savage aborigines.
But Aggie would have scowled,
to make me laugh and ask him
to recite some verses, his performance
magicking away the menace and horrid scars
that writhe like asps down his face.

These gentlemen on deck, his superior
in every way that makes society possible.
Yet how I’d love to watch them and their ladies
scramble from his path as he guided his mount
through Hyde Park, intoning poems
like a mad baritone from Wagner,
and then display his marksmanship,
and all the time, I’d clap, a schoolgirl
in love with the first wild actor she ever beheld,
grown giantly gorgeous in the footlights.



Aboard the Britannia, Sophia Starling Recalls Her First Night of Intimacy with John Sprockett

by Robert Cooperman

I have tried to blot it out,
but like a bloodstain, it will not come clean.
Sitting in a deck chair in the sun,
the chug of engines, the slap of surf,
the murmur of sedate laughter of travelers,
it seems impossible now:
his face twisted by terrible scars
but on that evening—cold, wet,
exhausted from floundering through drifts,
our horses lost, an exhilaration
to be alive against all odds—
I succumbed to his desires, and my own.

What would these ladies and gentlemen say?
What would a future husband do?
But to deny it is to betray the poet
hiding in a man of violence,
though his verses were laughable:

“Miss Starling and me, we traveled together,
Through fields of columbines, brutal weather.”

Ludicrous, yet they make me cry.
That night, despite my attempts at burial,
shall remain with me forever.
I can feel his arms laying me down
on the rough pallet, his hands chaffing warmth
back into my frost-nipped fingers and feet.
I cried out when feeling returned
and he sang to distract the pain, startled me
with bits of verse he composed on the spot.
When I kissed him, clung to him
like a grateful shipwrecked mariner,
all the stars exploded at once.



I shudder, a steward asks if I've caught
a chill in the changeable sea air.
"No," I smile at my secret memory.
Suddenly, I'm sobbing, running to my cabin,
tears like run-off, his ghost a fading mist,
no place for him in England,
as he would attest with a tip of his stetson,
a nudge to the withers of his stallion
lost in the blizzard.



Painting by Gary Wolgamott

John Sprockett to Sophia Starling in England, Late 1874

by Robert Cooperman

Dear Sophie,
The takings've been good this year,
beaver and fox traipsing into my traps,
begging to be turned into ladies' coats.
I could have one stitched for you,
pretty as the stars that night snow finally
stopped falling hard as shattered glass.
To send it would make me feel
you were still cuffing me,
making me recite the poems I learned
without bothering to try—
my one talent that's got nothing
to do with killing.

I've not been altogether good:
some bully-boy laughed at my scars.
I grabbed him and a whiskey bottle both;
the two naturally colliding.
He went for his gun, and I for mine.
His blood-blind shot killed a whore.

"What if she were Sophie?" I thought
as she died in my arms.
It took four trappers to keep me
from putting a bullet into my skull,
kicking that dead butcher's head in
while I howled like a Cheyenne brave
that's disgraced himself in battle.
Everyone swore it was a matter of honor,
still, I see her cloudy eyes staring up,
hear her mutter about wind in her hair
on a beach one clean morning,
a boy named Charlie, his lips salty.

I warned you I was no damn good,
your company the only thing that kept me
from murdering one-half the territory,
accidentally killing the other.



Sophia Starling in England Writes to John Sprockett, Colorado Territory, Late 1875

by Robert Cooperman

Dear John,
I have grappled all morning
with how to break my news to you.
The swiftest way best:
I'm to be married.
Perhaps I have erred in answering your letters,
which would have surely ceased
along with your infatuation
when I boarded my train in Denver:
you the one who didn't wait
to shake hands like true comrades.

I would be a liar
to say I don't miss you:
especially when the east wind
blows dustily in high summer
and I can smell thin mountain air,
a campfire, the rank perfume
of horses ridden over rough terrain;
hear the songs you sang—
little miracles of civilisation
in that pagan-glorious wilderness.
Our grand scaling of Long's Peak
is a memory that warms my heart
as a match illuminates a lamp
and in turn, a whole room.

Edward is a gentleman,
a physician devoted to the poor,
thus a paragon in my eyes.
Wish me well; find your own joy,
or better, the treasure of contentment,
its surfaces not so easily tarnished
as the base pyrite of brief ecstasy.

To be continued in future issues.

The poems that comprise *The Badman and the Lady* are part of *IN THE COLORADO GOLD FEVER MOUNTAINS*, published by
Western Reflections Inc., P.O. Box 410, Ouray, CO 81427.



Contributors

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Stepan Chapman of Cottonwood, Arizona has had his fiction published in the *Wisconsin Review*, *Portland Magazine*, *Hawaii Review*, *Maverick Press*, and *International Quarterly*. His novel, *The Troika*, winner of the 1997 Philip K. Dick Memorial Award, was published by Ministry of Whimsy Press. Chapman has also written articles for *The Comics Journal*, *Eye*, and *SF Eye*. His drawings and comic strips have appeared in *Aura*, *Long Shot*, *Lynx Eye*, *The Plastic Tower*, *Reglar Wiglar*, and *Thorny Locust*.

Robert Cooperman's second collection, *The Badman and the Lady*, is part of *In The Colorado Gold Fever Mountains* from Western Reflections, Inc., P.O. Box 410, Ouray, CO 81427. His work has appeared in *The Centennial Review*, *Cimarron Review*, and *North Dakota Quarterly*. His first book, *In the Household of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, was published by the University Press of Florida.

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Richard Dixon lives in Norman. He has spent the last thirty years teaching school, the last fifteen of those as a high school teacher working with students with learning disabilities. He is also a tennis coach. His published work is included in anthologies of poetry and fiction of the Individual Artists of Oklahoma, as well as various other anthologies and chapbooks.

Richard Fein has been published in many journals, including *Birmingham Poetry Review*, *Droplet Journal*, *Zuzu's Petals*, *Touchstone*, *Windsor Review*, *Maverick*, *Sonoma Mandala Literary Review*, *Ellipsis*, *Roanoke Review*, and *El Dorado Poetry Review*.

Kathleen Johnson is currently putting together a collection of poetry titled *Just West of Freedom*, based on

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William Jolliff is associate professor of English at George Fox University. His poetry and criticism have appeared in *Midwest Quarterly*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Quarterly West*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Appalachian Heritage*, and many other journals. His first collection of poems, *Whatever Was Ripe*, was published last year by Bright Hill Press.

Fran Kaplan, a retired jewelry designer, is a freelance writer. She resides in Palm Springs where she was editor of the Palm Springs Writers Guild newsletter. Her work was chosen as a finalist in the 1997 *Writer's Digest* Writing Competition's Personal Essay category and has recently appeared in *Northeast Corridor*. Her essay, "Milestones and Hot Potatoes" was winner in non-fiction, writers' choice, Black Hills branch of the National League of American Pen Women 1998. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Alligator*, *Juniper*, *Belletrist Review*, *Orange Willow Review*, *The Tall Grass Anthology*, *The MacGuffin* and *The South Carolina Review*. Her story "Stinky Tea" recently received a Pushcart nomination.

Richard D. Kahoe writes a weekly religion column, "Frontier Faith," for the *Woodward News*, and they are occasionally reprinted by the *Watonga Republican*. His other major enterprise is truck gardening, as an active summer member (and treasurer) of the Woodward Mainstreet Farmers Market.

W.P. Kinsella is the author of twenty-five books of fiction, poetry, and non-fiction, as well as three movie scripts, the most famous being *Field of Dreams*. He has received the Houghton-Mifflin Literary Fellowship, the Canadian Authors Association Prize for Fiction, the Books in Canada First Novel Award, the Stephen Leacock Medal for Humor, the Decorations: Order of Canada, and the Periodical Marketers Award.

Dale M. Kushner is a writer, educator, and arts administrator. She received her MFA in Writing from Vermont College and has taught creative writing to students of all ages. She is the founder of The Writers'



Place, a literary center in Madison, Wisconsin. She has served as a board member of The St. James Colony, an artists' colony in Michigan, and has been on the review panel for literature for *The Wisconsin Academy Review*. Her poetry has been widely published in literary journals including *Crazyhorse*, *The Black Warrior Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *Nimrod*, *The Ohio Review*, *Poetry*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Poetry East*, *Women's Review of Books*, and in an anthology by Viking Penguin, *Unsettling American: Race and Ethnicity in Contemporary American Poetry*. Ms. Kushner is a recipient of a Wisconsin Arts Board Individual Artist Award Grant in the Literary Arts. Her collection of poems, *Another Kingdom*, was published in the former Yugoslavia, where she was a visiting writer. Her interest in Carl Jung has taken her to the C.G. Jung Institute in Zurich for intensive study. She is currently at work on a novel, *Lower Angels*, part of which has appeared in *The Beloit Fiction Journal*.

Walt McDonald's latest book is *Counting Survivors* (University of Massachusetts Press). Two other books are *After the Noise of Saigon* (University of Massachusetts Press) and *Night Landings* (HarperCollins). He has published fifteen collections of poems and one book of fiction for presses such as University of Pittsburgh Press, University of North Texas Press, University of Massachusetts Press, Ohio State University Press, Spoon River Poetry Press, and Texas Tech University Press. He has published more than 1,600 poems in journals and collections, including *American Poetry Review*, *The American Scholar*, *The Antioch Review*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, *The Missouri Review*, *The Nation*, *New England Review*, *Poetry*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Sewanee Review*, *Shenandoah*, *The Southern Review*, *Southwest Review*, and *Westview*. His awards include three National Cowboy Hall of Fame's Western Heritage Awards, two National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowships, and four Texas Institute of Letters Awards.

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Sheryl L. Nelms has over 4,000 poems, articles, and short stories published. Some of the magazines that have used her work are: *Reader's Digest*, *Modern Maturity*, *Kaleidoscope*, *Copper's*, *Grit*, *Country Woman*, and

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W. Dale Nelson's poetry has appeared in *Southwest Review*, *Kansas Quarterly*, and other magazines of the United States, Canada, and England. He is a former prize-winning White House reporter for the Associated Press and the author of two books on the American presidency. He lives in Laramie, Wyoming.

Charles Rafferty's first full-length collection of poems was published by the University of Arkansas Press; *The Man on the Tower* won the 1994 Arkansas Poetry Award, selected by Susan Ludvigson. In addition, he has published two chapbooks: *The Wave That Will Beach Us Both* and *The Bog Shack*. Currently, he is an editor for a computer consulting firm and the book review editor of *Hellas*.

Roy Rasera is a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and has been working at Intel Corporation as a Process Engineer. He has written and performed his works at open mics, readings, benefit shows, and poetry slams, and has been published in the past two years in various smaller publications and chapbook competitions. He is currently compiling his first poetry book, *Contact*, in which he presents a single twenty-something's yearning for physical, emotional, and social interaction. Work is forthcoming in *Orange Willow Review*.

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Virgil Suarez's first book of poetry, *You Come Singing*, is due out this fall from Tia Chucha Press/Northwestern University. He has earned fellowships from the Florida State Arts Council, and has won an award for the best poem from *The Caribbean Review*. His poems have appeared in such journals as *Blue Mesa Review*, *The Chariton Review*, *Sow's Ear Review*, *Cimarron*, *Crazy Horse*, and *Puerto del Sol*. He teaches creative writing at Florida State University and lives with his family in Tallahassee. In his spare time he breeds and shows canaries.



DJ Sutherlin is an American painter and author, holding a B.A. in Art from Central Missouri State University. Her artwork has been displayed at Science Fiction/Fantasy and Gaming conventions and various galleries in the Midwest and South sections of the U.S.A. She is best known for her paintings of the mythical horses, Unicorns and Pegasi. Her first "series" in 1996, "The Biblical Unicorn" was inspired by the eight references to the unicorn in the King James Version of the Bible. To contact Sutherlin about her work, write: Flyinghorse Gallery PO Box 333 Union Grove, AL 35175-0333 USA, or visit her web site at www.flyinghorse.net to view her work.

Marc Swan lives on Cape Cod, and has poems in print and in electronic publications in the United States and abroad, including works in *The Baltimore Review*, *Slant*, *Other Poetry*, *Rattle*, *CV2*, and *Tears in the Fence*.

Brenda Black White was born in Callahan County, Texas. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in numerous publications across the country, including: *McCall's Magazine*, *Confrontation*, *CrazyQuilt*, *Distillery*, *Eureka*, *Orange Willow Review*, *Reed Magazine*, *Riversedge*, *Shmooz Magazine*, *Sulphur River Review*, *Texas Review*, *Verve*, *Woman*, and *Texas in Poetry: A 150-Year Anthology*. Her book of poetry, *Callahan County*, was published by Plain View Press and received literary recognition from A. C. Greene, Elmer Kelton, Vassar Miller, and other members of the Texas literati. When she isn't writing poetry, White can often be found sharing it with audiences from New York to Texas to Florida, having recently given a one-woman show at the Center For The Arts in Stuart, Florida. She has also performed her work on Public Radio in Phoenix and Austin.

Aaron Worley is a freelance writer living in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He currently writes music and entertainment pieces for *Crosswinds Weekly*, and his articles have been in *The Albuquerque Tribune* and *New Mexico En Accion*. He is also Chris Jungle for "Shut Up, I'm Talking," and his columns can be accessed at cent.com/abetting/. His short stories have placed in *The Weekly Alibi Short Short Fiction Contest* for two consecutive years.

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Illustrations

- 7 Photograph (detail) by Joel Kendall, Stigler High School outfielder, Weatherford High School baseball tournament
- 9 Photograph used with permission of airplanes.com, Lockheed Electra DC-10 used by Amelia Earhart and Fred Noonan
- 10 Photograph of Fred Noonan used with permission of Fred Burnam
- 15 Photograph by Joel Kendall, "Charlie," a Belgian Blue bull
- 17 Photograph (detail) by Joel Kendall
- 21 Photograph by Joel Kendall, 66 West Twin Drive-In, west of Weatherford, one of only three drive-ins operating in Oklahoma
- 23 Photograph by Joel Kendall, 66 West Twin Drive-In, restored for operation in 1999
- 25 Photograph (detail) by Joel Kendall, 66 Twin Drive-In concession stand
- 28 Photograph by Joel Kendall, Weatherford garden
- 30 Sketch provided by D.J. Sutherlin, owner of Flyinghorse Studios
- 34 Photograph (detail) by Joel Kendall, northwest Oklahoma map
- 41 Photograph by Joel Kendall, fishing flies tied by Russell Carr of Weatherford
- 44 Photograph (detail) by Joel Kendall
- 45 Photograph by Joel Kendall, haybales near Roll, Oklahoma
- 46 Photograph by Neal Rue, 1941 Ford
- 50 Photograph (detail) by Joel Kendall
- 56 Photograph (detail) by Joel Kendall
- 62 Untitled painting by Gary Wolgamott, Gulf of Mexico near Galveston, Texas



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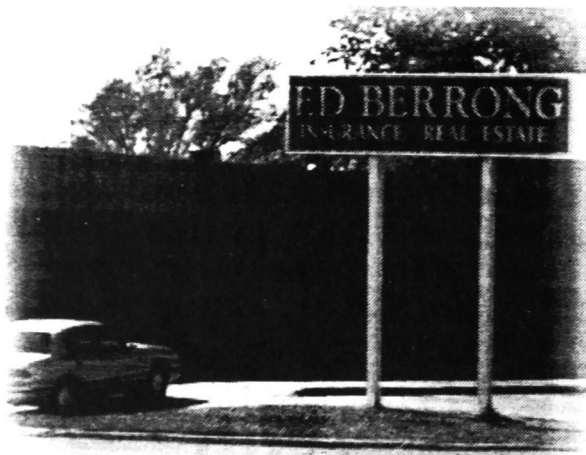
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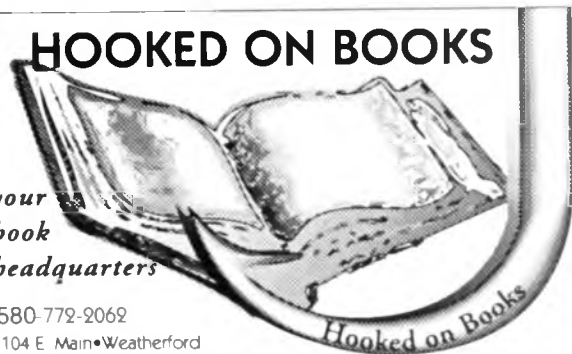
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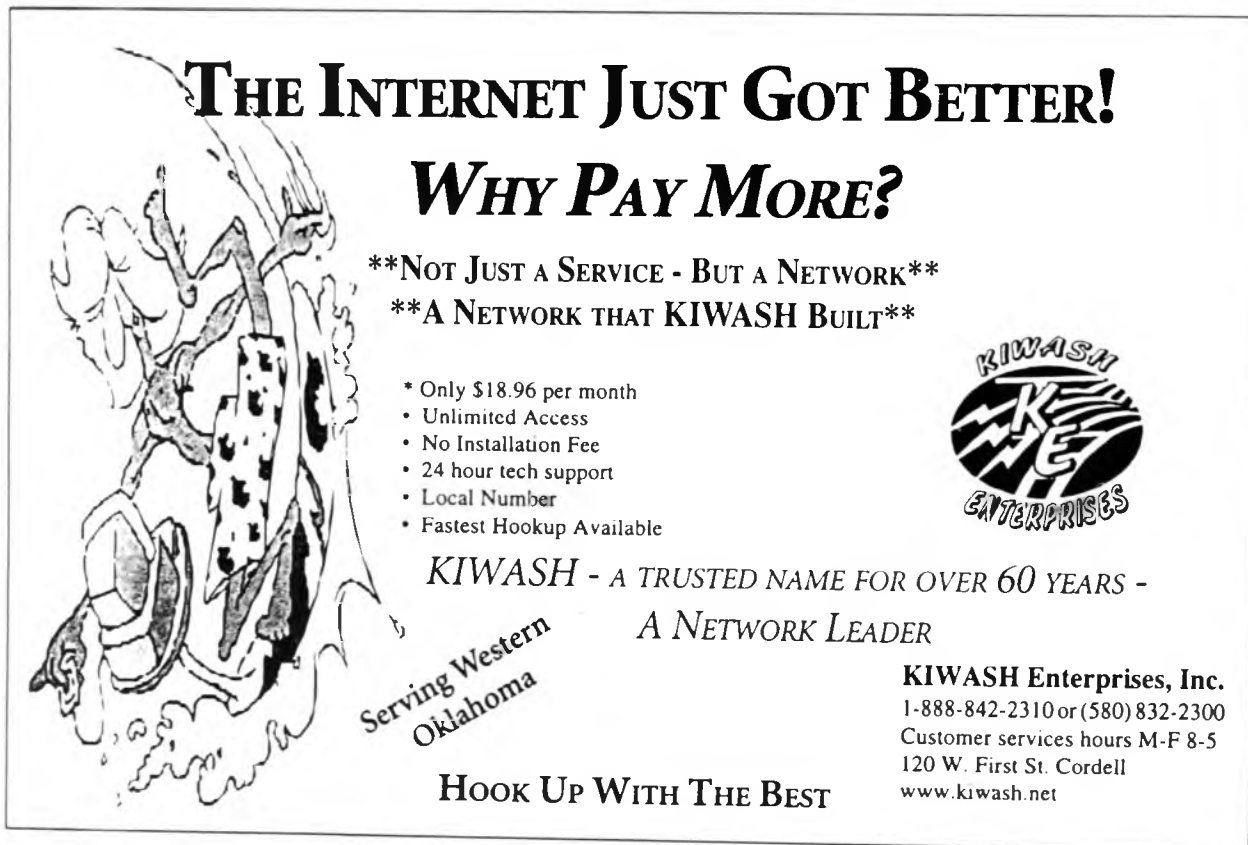
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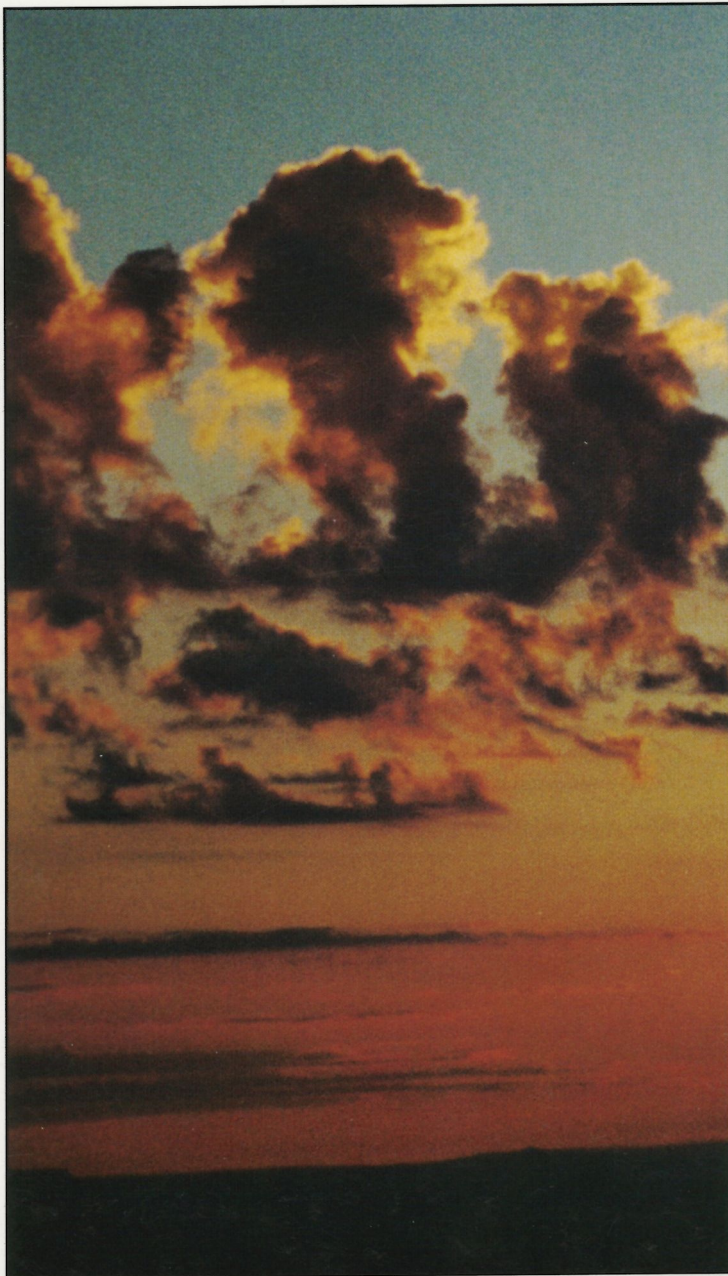
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