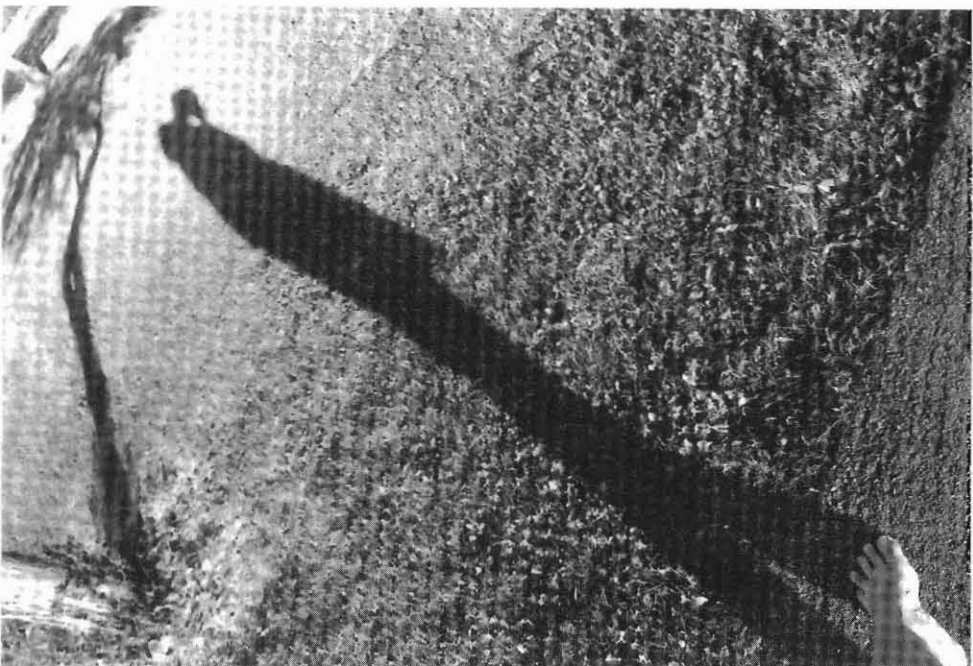


SIGNATURES



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A Magazine of Art and Literature - 1992

Editor	<i>Anuj Grover</i>
Staff	<i>Brian Hafner Josh DeWitt Kristen Pelletier Heather Kennedy Nicole Battaglia Ben Rebach</i>
Secretarial Assistant	<i>Dorothy Stundtner</i>
Advisor	<i>Mark Price</i>

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What an interesting creature you are.
You've changed your form
Whittled yourself down to the barest essentials.
A horror movie monster
But you are flesh, you are alive.
Just barely.
In your eyes I see a hate
Burning with white fire
Festering in your soul.
Hate for yourself, hate for the world
And hate for me.
How can anything so emaciated
(Down to half a person)
Feel that much hate-enough
For four strong men?
Why have you made a whisper out of yourself?
What was so terrible-
Your home, your family, your life?
If those were your requirements
Then it should have been me.
And some times, when I look in the mirror,
On the days when my sun rises black
Or not at all,
I wonder what it's like
To be you. I envy you.
The epitome of economy you are
Maximum output for minimum input.
And to think someday I can barely get out of bed.
To be you, for a day.
I shudder to think.

-Erika Krystaf

From Zero

As I lay in the grass on a windy hillside
A thousand voices spoke to me
One told me of the past I wept in sweet nostalgia
Another spoke of simple things lazy days and whisperings
Thru all the voices one stood out
It rambled on about the future, of days ahead I could not see
Though the ones before it were more enticing
These new hard thoughts and pressures gripped me
I saw the colors of my life, the blue the brown, grey and black
The breeze began to idle
Dark clouds, stale air, deep depression grew to fondle
I tried to scream my voice had left me
A tear burst from my eye
It rained and stormed it raged and ravaged
It felt like years had passed me by, the voices turned away
All but one, from deep inside it reached with all its might
It grabbed and groped, pulled and twisted, forming one last hope
Slowly the storm receded, the sun began to shine
Relit was the fire inside
Once again I would conquer the world
Carry on voice of knowledge
See the spectral of imagination
Use it free it, and carry on

-Paul Helling



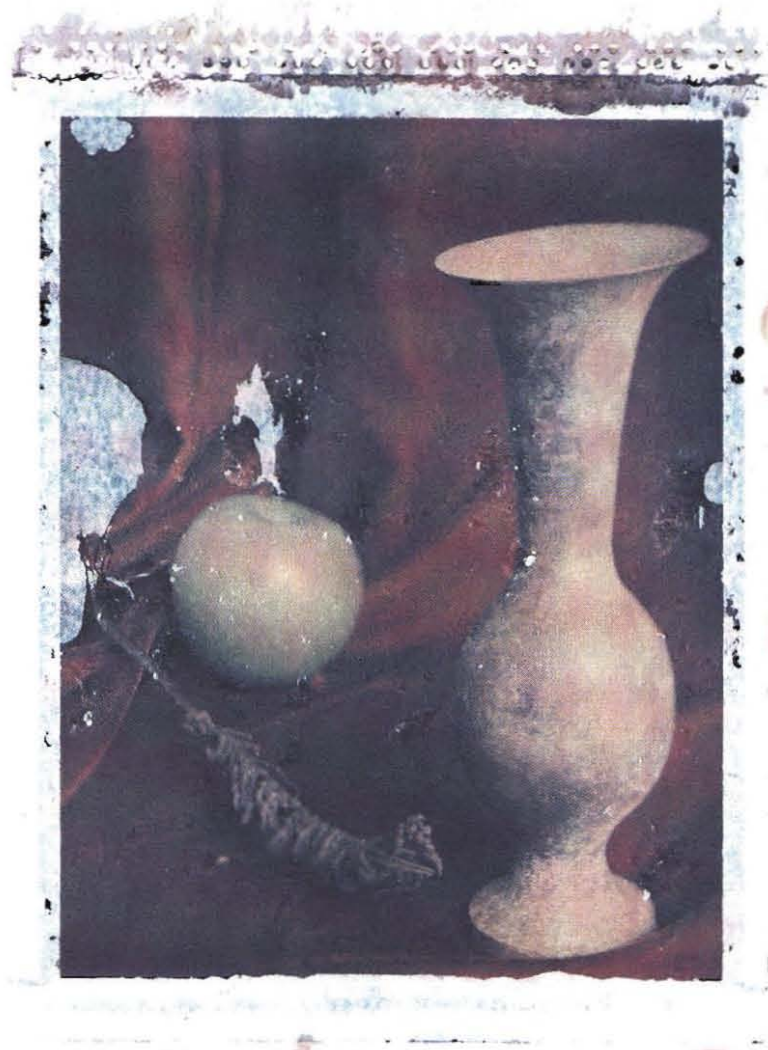
-Greg Tambini

Life Cycle of a Moth

Do not worry over those things
which can not be changed
for they will only cause
stress.

Instead,
concern yourself with the
changeable future
and confront the inevitable by
assisting those which it affects.
Doing so will
comfort.

D.C.R.



- Rebecca Ames

Untitled

Speak to me of certain things
That you would like to say
Talk of what tommorow brings
And tell of your "Today."

I will bring you down my road,
but ask not that you would follow
There are things that even showed
Another should not swallow.

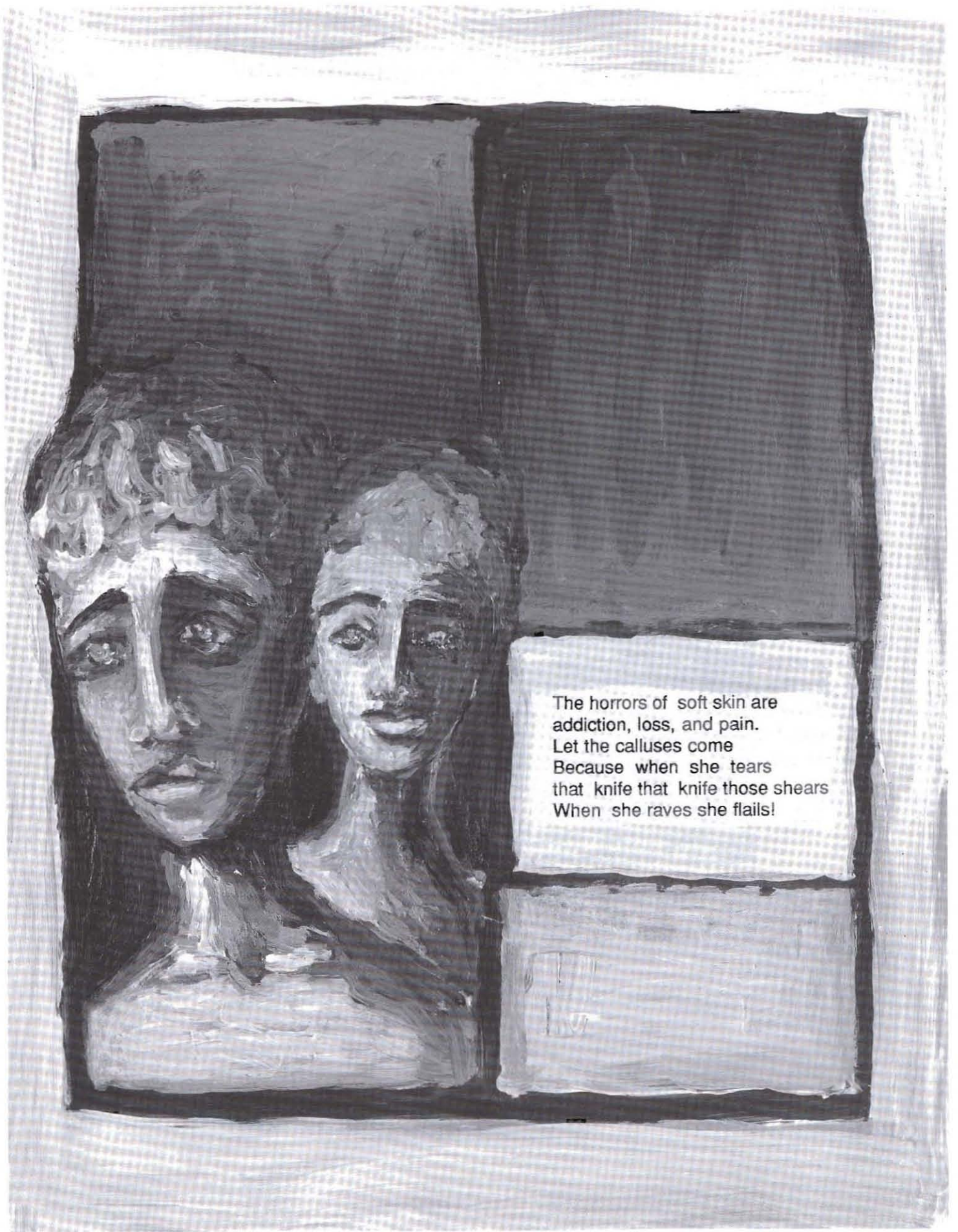
Let us do the peoples dance
A fine folk of figure eight
Carry not my worlds for chance
You'd not endure the weight-

They are enough for one to bear
But much too much for two
If you'd link us by the center, there,
Yes, that would surely do.

I'd shudder if you thought of me
As something you could own
We can try to find eternity,
But I will die alone.

I ask only for your eyes
To search for peace of mind
I'll hope that you realize
It's not me, but you, you'll find.

Amy T. Clay

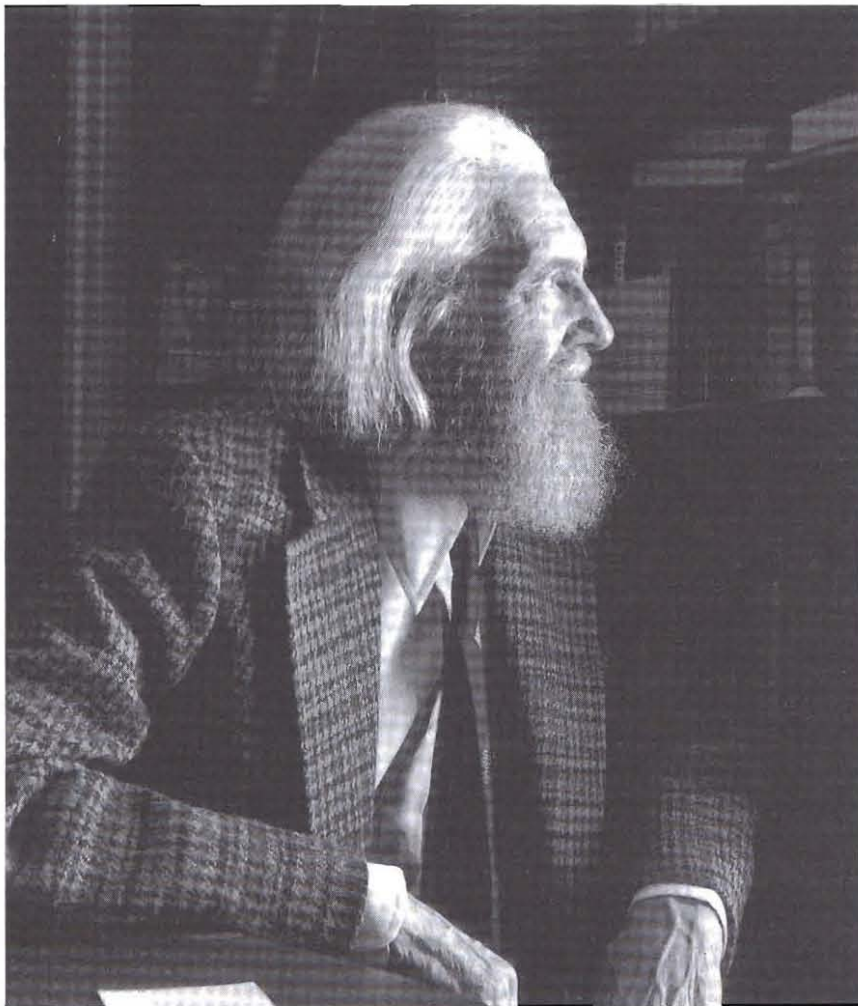


The horrors of soft skin are
addiction, loss, and pain.
Let the calluses come
Because when she tears
that knife that knife those shears
When she raves she flails!

Goodbye, Avalon...

The Age of Chivalry is over, the day of dreams is done.
The knights of fables are gone, their battles all unwon.
No longer shall we see princely banners, emblazoned in the sky,
Or hear the minstrels sing soft, sweet ballads of ages long gone by.
The majestic castles have all crumbled to the hardened ground.
And beautiful maidens in need of rescue are no longer to be found.
Never again will we hear heroic tales of the ancient past,
For all the heroes are gone forever...dead until the last.
Dancing footsteps no longer echo throughout the barren halls,
Nor do the great hounds come running at their master's calls.
The sounds of music now only whisper through the broken stones.
And the polished weapons of war lay upon the ground like discarded bones.
Never shall we again see the reign of powerful kings, princes, or queens.
The only place fairytales now exist is within our fading dreams.
Legends no longer live; they were lost in the passing of glory.
Just as the tale ended with the final telling of that last story.
All that once was, all that gave us hope...now has died.
Beauty is lost forever, a truth that may not be denied.
Love was lost the day we stopped believing in hopes of forever,
And with hope gone, we lost all chance of staying together.
Sometimes, even fairytales fade, and even dreams do die.
It's not so easy to let go, yet we must somehow say goodbye.
Just like the Age of Dreams, love slowly fades from our eyes.
Tears flow like seas of sadness as we watch it's sorrowful demise.
Although I know that, as before, life will go on,
I cannot help but regret to say goodbye, Avalon...

-Brian J. Hafner



- Patricia Dougherty

Not Really A Night At The Opera

9 PM. Saturday. 11 November 1990.

Legs apart. Exposed in stirrups.

Pain.

Need a bathroom.

"Sorry, you can't leave the room till the exam is done.

We know it hurts."

Hospital. Pain, yes. Pissing, no.

"We're going to insert a catheter now. This may hurt.

Try to think of good things."

Good things? More pain?

He did this. It's his fault. He slipped out, the slime.

(More pain.) Can't keep it in. Can't keep it up, he's always drunk.

He's probably drinking right now.

There's a fly in here.

Really need a bathroom now.

"We have to run some tests to determine if it's an infection."

(That should be painfully obvious.)

"We'll be back in 15 minutes. (Presently 9:30.) then you can use the bathroom."

Time passes. It's 10:45. Toilet seeking commences.

Clad in a paper towel and sneakers. Stumbling about.

Doubling over occasionally. Passersby don't notice.

A ladies room locked--locked?

Careening down the hall. Passing people in the gurneys.

Lifeless eyes. Abandoned by doorways (till someone remembers where he/she dropped them off.) A frightened child runs by, screaming for mother.

Another bathroom--open. Porcelain destiny.

Relief at last.

"Leah Bosworth, please report back to you examining room now."

NO! Still have to go! The message repeats.

Coffee cart ahead. Plastic cup. Storage closet. Why not.

Aim. (Wishful thinking.) Relief.

"Leah Bosworth!" Nurses down the hall.

Cup abandoned on a counter.

Janitor eyes it. "Hmm, papaya juice?"

No, don't drink that!

"Leah, here, take this. You'll feel better soon."

Remainder of evening flies via Tylenol 3.

Codeine sanctuary, content for now.

He is gonna die tomorrow.

-Leah M. Bosworth

Untitled

When you look deep into your soul and search the deep recesses of your mind, you will find a black pit filled with obstacles and stumbling blocks.

You will find virgin lands and beaten paths, hidden passageways, narrow openings, and trap doors.

You'll stumble and fall, you'll be confused and misled. You'll search undefinable lengths of time, looking for light, looking for an exit in this maze of emotions, fears, realities, and dreams.

You may not find a way out; you may be confined, forever, searching, never finding a truth or a resting spot or an answer.

When you're this far in, you're trapped, forever searching, not knowing exactly what you're searching for and why. Once you enter, you cannot exit, and you will enter, at some point in your life; hopefully not too early, for you do not want to spend too much of your life trapped inside. Only those with such simple minds that there are no obstacles can find an exit, for they are walking in empty space. Great geniuses enter at birth and are forever caught in the confines of their complex minds.

Many, so called "average" people, enter at some time in their life, different for each person. The partial answers you find will not justify your searching, and you'll search more and more, forever hoping for answers, the realization that you will not find these answers gnawing at you until you end up lost, wandering, thirsty for relief, hungering for answers, eventually dying of starvation.

-Michelle R. Stosberg

A Diversion from Psychology Class

How I love to let my hair down and let it be tangled by the wind...

White skirts and petticoats
thousands of ruffles
Keep me warm

Green grass soft and warm beneath my feet
thousands maybe millions of flowers
to enjoy the beauty of.

Blue bluest sky, azure and glowing brightly
little puffy cotton balls of clouds promise
A fair day ahead.

White sheep on the hillside grazing on
green juicy grass
Bronze bells tinkling and playing.

Running down the hill, wind
whistling in my ears, my bare feet
cushioned on lush green grass

I swirl round and around, staring up
'til I fall, delicious sense of
flying through air

Spiraling, soaring, flying through the air
out of the corner of my eye,
catch the flight of a hawk...

and feel as though I should be in its place.

-Michele L. Brown



"Non compoe mentis"
-Rebecca Ames

I am tired and wish to cry
For loneliness has pervaded my soul.
Separated from my love,
My life
Yet staunch pride keeps my eyes dry.
No girlish tears of goodbye for me,
No sobs of anguish, no pleas to stay,
Just quiet words of farewell, spoken through
Teeth that clench when he turns to leave.
Clenched in discomfort as my
Heart breaks a little
Bleeds a little.
I comfort myself with Donnie's "Valediction"
But the question is always there-
Will my soul continue to stretch
Breaching the gap in time,
In distance, in reality?
Or will it break someday-
Snapping me torn into the netherworld of loneliness?

-Erika Krystaf

Surreptitious Joy

Blind
the night sky
black as day
she peers down upon the sleeping city
lights flicker
full luna
shivery wind under wings of gothic leather
Beside him
skim milk flesh
magenta flame
she stirs, lips apart and Ah
under white teeth, a sigh
mouth curving to an evil smile
as her fire cools

-Tom Catalano



It seems so dark, so very dark
It seems so desolate, so very desolate
I lie here all alone in a room with no space
The ceiling seems to be almost touching my face
There's a cool breeze that circles the room
I grasp my arms and shiver
To hopefully prevent some sort of doom
My lips begin to fall
My hand reaches out,
But my mind begins to doubt
It seems like the only thing left
Is to let myself go deaf
For then all the shearness of all the pain
Will no longer drive me insane.

-RAE

The Elk Deer

A few years ago, back in the summer of '85, I was travelling with my family by car. We were driving in Montana, searching for the road that led to Yellowstone National Park. We found the route; but we also found, directly in our path, a deer.

The deer made no move to save itself; and so my father slowed to a stop. Instead of veering around the deer and continuing, my father pulled over to the side so that all of us could view what I later learned was an elk deer. This elk could not have been more than five feet tall, with wide antlers and a beautiful golden coat. It was very alert - its ears perking up and tracing any sound.

In the distance behind us, another car was slowly becoming visible. It didn't seem to be slowing down. The deer, with a challenging look in its eyes, looked at the oncoming car. The car gained momentum and hit the deer without ever stopping. The deer flew up in the air, legs sticking out, and landed on the ground with a thud. I, witnessing this daylight tragedy, did not breathe.

Moments later, the deer stood up, shook himself, as if to ward off the hit, looked at me and took off as if nothing had occurred. I was mystified.

-Aileen Pagan
Best Prose

A Tease

Watch her they say
Through the smoke
Her spinning room
Warm with sweat and breath
She nurses a glass of rum
Sits on each of their laps
Her wet lips
They see laughing
One by one they watch her
Their hungry eyes want
Her smiling face
Catch her they say
She spins from
Each one's arms
Licks her lips
To finish the rum
Her blouse slipping
Down she bends
To kiss him
His for a moment
She laughs with a spin
On to the next
Hazy one.

-Erika Sears

The Tube

The woman sitting across from me with her eyes shut (she wasn't asleep because at every stop she opened them to see if it was hers.) had the same acne on her chin that I do. The girl next to her was Indian. I noticed her because she was dressed western-like but she had a black dot between her eyebrows.

So I sat there looking at this girl wondering what her social status was. Did she have a boyfriend? How long did she live here? That kind of stuff. The train stopped and she stopped to get off. As she stepped toward the door her eyes caught sight of someone outside the window. She waved excitedly and grinned pleasantly revealing two bucked teeth that were quite well hidden by her closed lips. She quickly sat back down and stared straight ahead still holding the bucked-tooth grin. She glanced toward the door quickly to see if all the passengers had yet gotten off. Underground etiquette held that passengers getting on the tube always waited for those getting off. Her eyes were sparkling with delight.

Finally, a young man with a briefcase stepped on. He was also Indian-looking, but dressed even more western-like than her. He stood right inside the door without even looking to see if all of the seats were filled. They were. He didn't look at the girl.

The door finally slid shut and the train started off again. She turned her head back to look at him and she said something to him, "How are you?" maybe it was. He looked up finally, answered with one or two words and looked away. She turned back and after a confused moment, she regained a small smile and a look of contentment.

When the train was at full speed she turned to him again and said something but he shrugged his shoulders and showed no interest in what she had to say. As she turned toward me she looked much different. The sparkle in her eyes was gone and a look of disappointment had replaced it.

I kept staring at the woman's face across from me to see how long I could do it before she opened her eyes and caught me. It usually didn't take long. I looked around at the assortment of other people in the car as I always do and eventually my eyes made it back to the girl's face again and my heart sank. She was staring out the window now which is a sure sign of discontent considering there was only a brick wall with some electrical wiring whizzing by. Her eyes were moist now and almost red.

Surprisingly, after a moment, she turned and looked at the man as if to give him one more chance. He didn't take notice and when she looked back, there was no question about her disappointment.

The man and I got off at the next stop. I didn't look where he went. I imagine the girl switched trains at the stop after that since she probably wasn't going in that direction anyway.

-Janet Hansel



- Greg Tambini

Stepping Stone

I once took a walk, along a stream.
It was if I was part of some beautiful dream.
The water, so brilliant, blue, and bright,
Shined with a blazing radiance in the day's light.
For many hours, I strolled along the shore,
Knowing only happiness, and content to know no more.
As I walked, I saw many beautiful things;
Creatures of beauty that every sunrise brings.
Soon, my path came to an end and I had to decide,
Whether to turn back, or cross to the other side.
This beautiful day made me easy to beguile,
So I chose to cross to the other side for a while.
I found a place where the stream was thin,
And I moved to a place where I would begin.
As I tried to cross, I realized my mistake.
For more than one step, this journey would take.
The stream, even here, was too wide for only me.
It was then that, a stone, I happened to see.
Halfway across, it rested in the rushing brook.
It could get me across, I knew with a look.
I ran down the shore to where the giant stone slept,
Jumping from shore to rock, hair flying as I leapt.
Landing with a thud, the rock neither stirred nor moved.
A precious companion this rock had certainly proved.
I stood upon the rock to catch my failing breath.
But I was too excited for I only had one step left.
In a leap, my journey would be over and I would be there-
On the other side, all alone, and without a single care.
I made ready to make that final step toward the other bank,
When I realized, for my journey, I had this stone to thank.
I paused, a frightening thought in my young and happy mind.
I would have gone without a thought and left this stone behind.
When all along it was the key to my heart's quest.
To think I might forget this stone...I was quite distressed.
How would I feel, to sit all alone and be so abused;
While all other things are appreciated, to be only used?
How terrible it would be, to be only a step along the way,
Never the place to be reached on a sunny day.
I felt so sad, to think of this stone I had never seen before.
For while all other things receive, it lives only to give more.
What a sad story...to be unloved and to live all alone.
Yet this is the life, and the purpose, of a stepping stone...

-Brian J. Hafner
Best Poetry

I am a Viking on the Psychic Seas...

Find me a mind
Where the riggings
Are stapled,
Where the high seas
Aren't water
And the clear skies
Are dappled
With a touch of pain's paint
I dot all my eyes
And blinking with vigor,
I still see the skies.



- Jeremey Sniatecki

So often I find myself
Wishing you would crush the doubts
That follow me in the light
Mimicking my clumsy gestures
Ridiculing my futile ambitions
In the dark they tear at me
Ripping transient wounds
That carry the sharpest pain
Every night the tears come
Harsh stinging tears well in my eyes
Why won't you crush these doubts?
Why do you give me such a distant touch?
Must love and fear
Walk hand in hand?

-CL Kavostas

In Search of the Reprehensible Past

Once upon a time
one could navigate this land
of simplicity.
But those days are long gone;
replaced
by an algorithm of complex intensity.

For better or for worse
(as yet to be determined),
our environment changes.
The overwhelmed sod,
left behind in technical confusion.

His epitaph:

The cause of death was realized;
a slow deterioration of the soul
which could not comprehend
all that was before him.
Instead of adaptation,
he chose
expiration.

D.C.R.



Companion

Nature demands a perfect match,
In order to keep all in tact.
Good has Evil to hold in check
Else each would be a brutal wreck.

Balance is a necessity,
To this delicate harmony.
One without the other is clear,
The loss of everything so dear.

Love and Hate combine to make one,
Life and Death as true as the sun.
Partners for immortality,
As certain as reality.

You and I share this parallel,
Not unlike Heaven and Hell.
Duo forever, ne'er to part,
Without a formal road to chart.

At extremes our existence lives,
Merged as one so fate seldom gives.
The contrast cues my heart to bleed,
Yet no other can fill my need.

-Ralph F. Donatelli

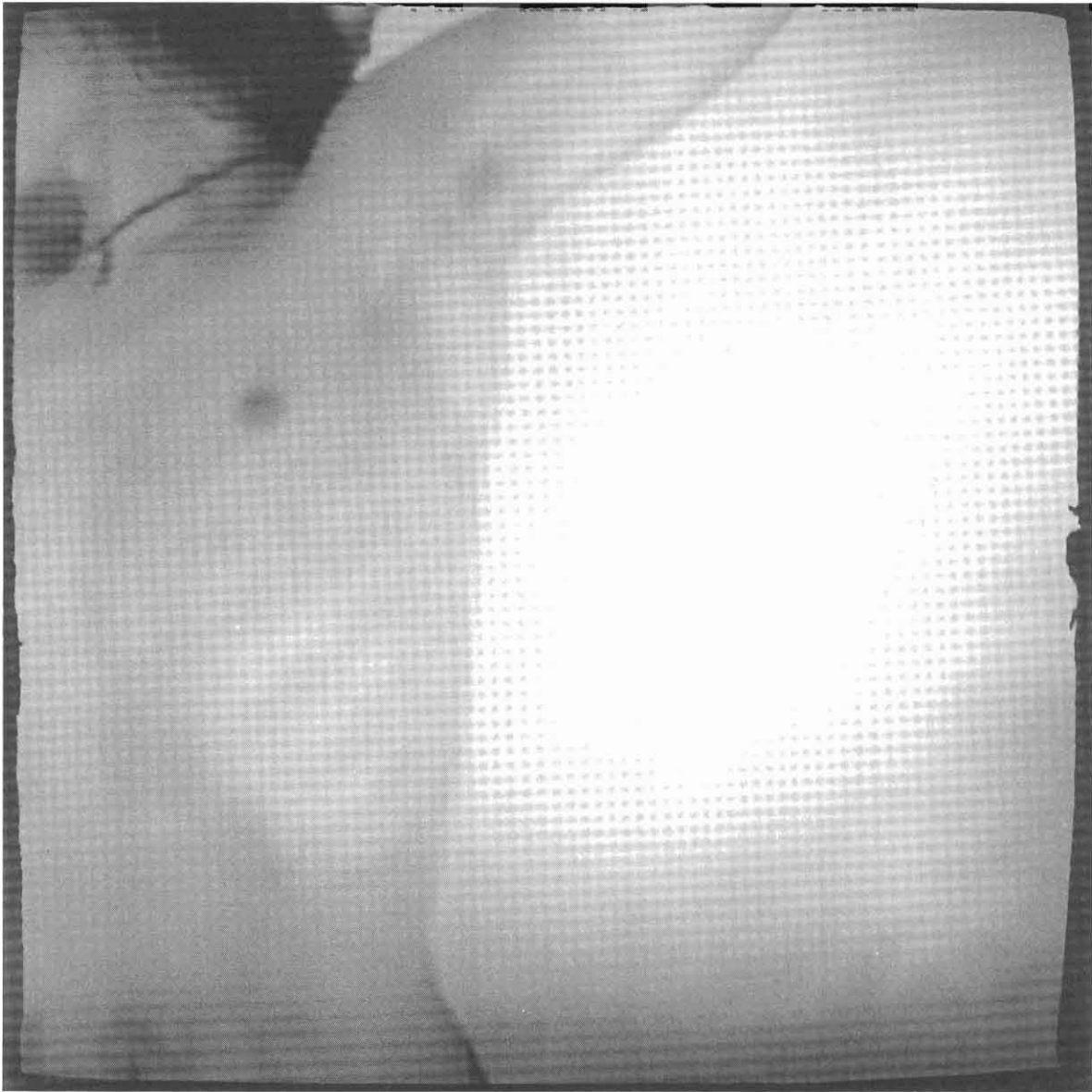
we lay in our separate beds
i think of you alone in yours
and sigh
out my window in the peach glow of a parking lot
Two lovers cover each other
in the firm assurance of a goodnight kiss

then he drives away
i can imagine his half empty face
staring at the road
thinking he left part of himself behind
i know he feels empty
full of lonely
and i know he would run back to her
if he knew she was
sitting on her steps
tearing needles from the spruce next to her
tossing them mindlessly at the sidewalk
feeling the same flat sadness

still, it's only goodnight

now, i'm lying here
losing myself in how wonderful it would be
to feel alone because you have left
not because you never came

. -Chris Losinger



"Agnus Dei"
- Rebecca Ames



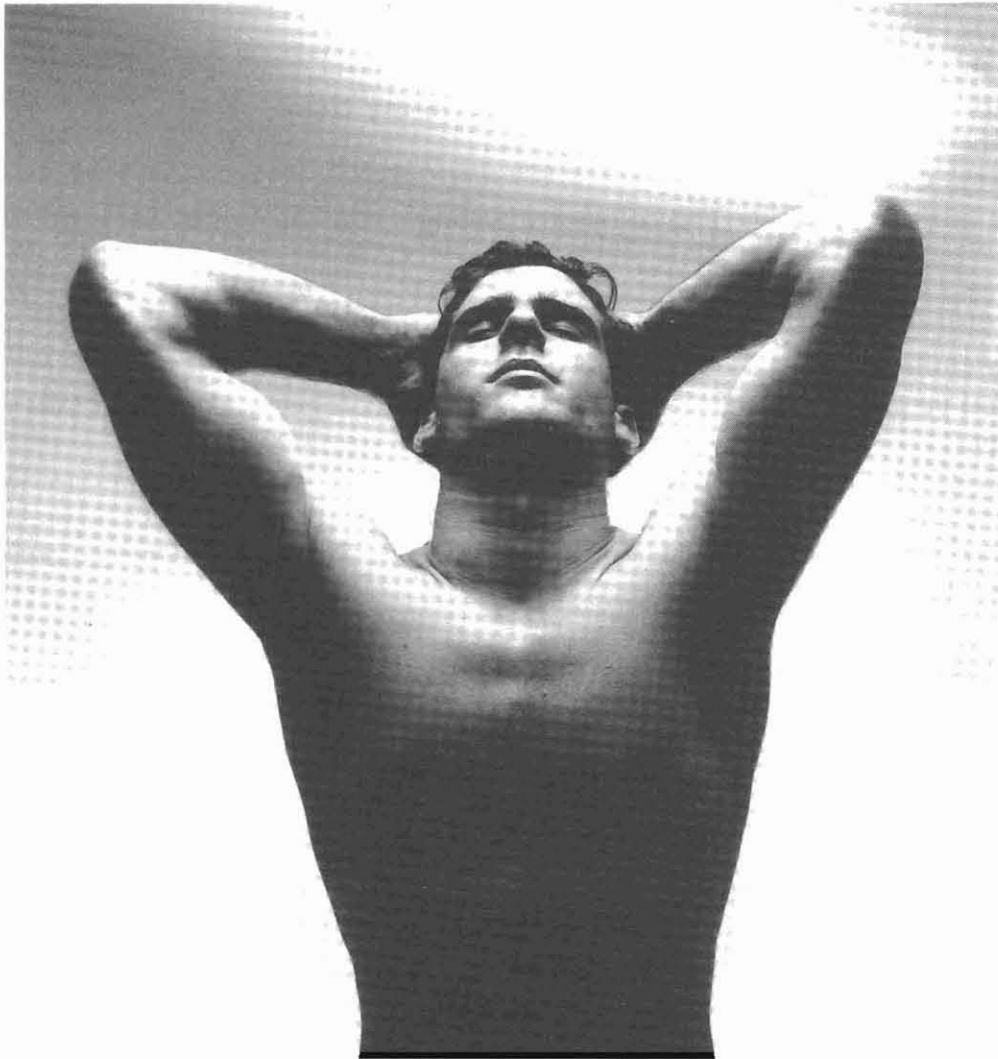


-Jennifer Dyson

When something finds you

Love simply is.
It is not an explanation,
Nor an excuse.
But rather love simply is.
Who can say
What love is?
To bind, to fetter love
Is not to know it.
To name, to describe love
Is not to know it.
Love simply is.
Love cannot be sought after
Or found-
It finds you.

-Rich Savacod



-Greg Tambini

Seventeen Years Later, The Answer

12 o'clock. Tuesday. Springtime, 1975.

Happy Time Nursery School.

Time to play. Crayon time finished.

Lots of toys. Blocks. Racecars. Weebles.

Done. (I think.) Get up to go with the others.

Cold hand on my shoulder, shoves me down in my chair.

"You're not finished yet."

"Yes I am. Can't I go play now?"

"No, look at that drawing. The colors are wrong. You can't even keep the colors in the lines."

She has long red hair. Cold hands.

"I tried. Please, let me go play with them."

Big smile. Lots of teeth."

"Nope, you've got to do it again by the time Mrs. Scott gets here. Then you can go out to play."

"Oh, okay." Turn page in coloring book.

Pick brown crayon. Violet-blue. Yellow. Carnation.

(I wish Mrs. Scott was here. She's not mean like the Red Lady.) Draw, slowly. Fill in every line. Lots of color.

Bonk.

Turn around. Crayon hit me. A piece of black.

Red Lady's at the end of the room reading. Looking stupid.

Look out the window. Birds chirping. Blue sky.

Everyone's out on the jungle gym. Everyone but me.

Bonk. "Ouch!"

"Shh, keep coloring."

"You're hitting me. I know it."

"No one's hitting you. Keep coloring or Mrs. Scott will be mad at you."

"I'm gonna tell her you're mean to me."

"Turn around. You're not going outside, EVER.

NOW KEEP DRAWING."

. Now, scared. No one else here. Shaking. Mom, come get me!

Try to color. Faster.

Bonk. Red crayon.

Don't turn around!

Bonk. White one.

No, she's mean. Don't turn around!

Bonk.

"No, let me go!" Get up and run as fast as four-year old legs can go. "No, no!"

Doorway. Almost safe—

Red hair in my face.

"No, no!"

Cold hand. Silver thing scratching. Don't look! Pull away!

"No, let me go!"

"You have to stay and finish! Look at the others' drawings, they're neater than yours. You can't go--"

My teeth bite into her bony hand as hard as four-year old teeth can--"OW!" She grabs harder.

"Please!"

She yanks my long hair back. "I'll cut it off! It's too Long! You little--"

"What on earth is going on?"

"Oh, Mrs. Scott, I'm Sorry," "Mrs. Scott, she's being mean!"

"Now, shush. It's okay, sweetie."

"Ma'am. I'm sorry. She just got upset and I tried to calm her down."

"Mrs. Scott, she's kept me in--"

"It's okay, it's all right. Just go outside now--oh, no, it's time to go in already."

Tears. "But--"

"Shh, you probably just missed your mommy. It's all right."

It's all right.

It's all right.

-Leah M. Bosworth



- Heather Kennedy
Best Black and White

Long Distance Relationships

I wish that highways
were not built so well
as to permit
frequent
interstate travel.

Then,
you'd know when to say
goodbye.

-D.C.R..

Desertwalker

I stood atop a dune, looking across the long expanse of sand upon sand upon and. . .

It's so easy to be hypnotized here. Designs are never the same and shadows are everywhere to be caught by the eyes of the beholder. Alas, I must tear mine away or else I be left to die.

To die. . .Such a tragic word, a scary word I say. I can easily be buried in this sand, never to be seen by the naked eye for centuries yet to come. Eyes that sometimes wander around the horizons of the dunes looking for something. Anything. And it won't be me.

A time I no longer know
A place I'm no longer lost
Which way should I go
O'er which hill I may cross

I walk the dunes
Where rain hardly cries
Is this my destiny
To live where no birds fly

I can no longer stand

So I sit down on the edge of a rounded cliff overlooking a multicolored dawn. The sky is washed with pink, orange, yellow, and even purple for this is rather beautiful. These are moments I can enjoy but I wish I had someone to enjoy it with. Who can save me?

Alone I now am
The worst nightmare to live
Someone who know me
Anything I'll give

I need it all
Love
Care
Respect
Show me one
Who will give all
And perhaps
With me fall

I am scared. Not of dying, no. I will gladly embrace death under the circumstance. But of living I am afraid, with but the sand to accompany me. A being that is beyond my understanding. Just mere minuscules of rocks as expansive as the universe may be with countless amount of stars. Is there a God to help me live a dream or is Satan going to play this game forever?

I hope not. . .

Sweat falls slowly from the tip of my eyebrow and drips from my nose onto the tip of my tongue and I savor the harsh flavor. Is that a person I see?

Hello. . .

I run and run and run
Underneath the fading sun
I run and run and run
Moving faster til darkness come

No one
To greet me with age
To talk long
But I yell in rage

I sit again
Tears alight my cheeks
I stare at nothing
For I am but meek

Can't you understand?
I am deathly afraid
Of being so alone. . .

So alone out here. . .

-Kevin P. Hulsing



- Jessica DiMuro

What We Know

Deep inside two nights
Penetrate two extremes opposing
Emotions beyond the confines
Of serenity.

On the eve commencing,
Surfaces once placid froze
From deeply anxious fear that lay beneath
Closing in as chilling ice
Crystallizing at the fulcrum of your eternities-
That which came before and that yet to come
As we sent you off to war.

The agony of chilling fear
To hold a hand-but not a life
To love a man in test of fate.
To see your face, but know the vision
Of a funeral in black.
Will these waves be tears,
And your war-ship a coffin,
Proving our first lessons of
The mediocrity of life
And the infinity of absolute death?

In the time of testing
Before the second night
The oceans turn to black
A bloody clot of shiny oil
To match the nightmare-grey sky
From the arsoned wells of oily hell
And a man who seems the Devil.
This pure evil, too familiar,
Brands a mark upon the soul
A horror so profound-
-As cold as a child's dream.

-Amy T. Clay



I said "Goddammit" 14 times
I never say 'Goddammit'
'Where the hell could she be?' He was angry, too.

I was relieved and thankful when I saw
her sleepy head; the noogies I planted on her skull
were only in jest

His reaction surprised me.
Thinking that he would take his anger out on her,
he reacted like a father who had just found his
lost child.

Here, I appreciated how much I loved the two
of them and how good things are.

- Jessica DiMuro