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FUGUE



The University Of Idaho Literary Digest

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(As well as for the last issue, too. Our apologies to you, Andi.)

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Since 1989, when *FUGUE* was started, none of us knew if it would survive. It is still, perhaps, just another small lit-zine, but over the years—and ten issues—we've been honored with works from talented newcomers and professionals in the field of writing. Submissions to the magazine aren't a problem. With a small budget, exposing the magazine to the public *is* a problem.

This issue, *FUGUE* steps into the information age, where it belongs. As well as the hardcopy, this issue will be produced in a *Windows*™ format and placed on the campus network, readable at any *Windows*-operative terminal campus-wide. And...

Ben Coburn and cohorts have put *FUGUE* into the HTML format for the World Wide Web on the Internet. Anyone on the planet with a proper connection and software can access and read *FUGUE* on the WWW. I won't go into a long explanation of the Web part of Internet. You can read about it in

almost any computer-zine. For those on the UI campus, just drop by the computer labs and ask about Mosaic and the Web; they'll show you how easy it all really is.

Traditionally, I should thank the contributors of the issue's content, and I do. However, there are others who deserve as much.

FUGUE's growth is not just my doing. It's not even the exclusive efforts of the current staff. For four years, English students at the UI have spent a lot of time (for very little return) to keep the magazine running, surviving, and crawling forward. Even if no one else thanks them, I do. I'm in my final year of MA studies, with one more semester to go, then who knows where I'll be. It pleases me that something I had a hand in starting has so far stood the test of a little time. Thankfully, there will be others to keep it going when I'm gone, or so I hope. Simply put, after being so long-winded (as usual, for those who know me), my thanks to everyone who has ever laid a working finger on *FUGUE*. Many, many thanks!

For those interested, copies of *FUGUE for Windows*™ are available for \$4 at the editorial address. All funds payable to "*Fugue*." No special software is required. This electronic version operates with standard software already a part of the *Windows* environment. Easy installation instructions are in a basic text file on the disk.

—J.C. Hendee, *Exec. Ed.*


 FEATURED WRITER

 KATHY
 ACKER
 INTRODUCTION
 BY
 LANCE OLSEN

Sometime during the glassy dimness of my third year on this planet, I discovered there were all these electrical outlets in the walls around my house, and surmised that myriad interesting things would probably manifest if I stuck myriad interesting items into them. Like bobby-pins. I couldn't help myself. And so, of course, I *did* stick myriad interesting items into them, and was, of course, kicked back on my butt. What occurred to me only recently was that this event quite possibly marked my first encounter with fine art—with an object, that is, in my immediate environment that shocked me, enlivened me, challenged me, woke me up, shook my shoulders, caused me to rethink the pluri-verse around me and my place in it.

The same could be said about Kathy Acker's work. Her fiction

possesses an outlaw intelligence that re-writes and re-rights traditional literature (and, by implication, the world it attempts to reflect) in order to question the structures and beliefs held by that literature (and, by implication, that world). In *Empire of the Senseless*, for instance, she systematically snuffs the patriarchal father while trying to imagine a society freed from Oedipal considerations and taboos. In *In Memorium to Identity*, she disturbs our ideas about who we and the authorial self are. She pla(y)-giarizes such master-texts as Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Dickens' *Great Expectations*, and Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, and mines such traditionally "low culture" genres as science fiction, pornography, and detective fiction, in acts that add up to a kind of liberating literary terrorism.

Born in New York City, tutored at a private girls' high school, disowned by her parents while a teen, educated on the streets and as an undergraduate at Brandeis University and the University of California at San Diego, and as a graduate at UCSD, the City College of New York, and New York University (where she worked toward a Ph.D. in literature that remains unfinished), Kathy visited the University of Idaho this fall as our Distinguished Visiting Writer in fiction and proved to be a deeply nurturing teacher and

genuinely warm-hearted human. The distance between her angry prose and persona, on the one hand, and her pleasant presence, on the other, is remarkable. Kathy's public reading (the best-attended at the University, ever), which took place in the amazingly inappropriate setting of the Law Building Courtroom during the amazingly appropriate Banned Books Week, prompted more than a month of refreshingly healthy controversy in the

local papers and across the area (and here we should recall a simple, if vital, formula: controversy = education). It is this Idaho incident, among others, she addresses in the following essay on the artist's role as citizen, delivered at a conference on censorship in the arts in Chicago. I wish to thank Kathy for allowing *Fugue* to publish the piece for the first time, and for bringing the electrical spirit of debate to the inland northwest.

SPEECH FOR THE ARTIST IN SOCIETY CONFERENCE

Chicago, October 1994

Kathy Acker

I want to begin this by talking about something that just hapened to me. First, let me set the stage.

On November 2 of this year, in Idaho, Proposition 1 will be voted upon. If enacted, Proposition 1 would establish the following policies:

...providing that no state agency, department or political subdivision shall grant minority status to persons engaged in homosexual behavior: providing that same-sex marriages and domestic partnerships shall not be legally recognized: providing that elementary and school educators shall not discuss homosexuality as an acceptable behavior: providing that no state funds shall be expended in a manner that has the effect of accepting or approving homosexuality: limiting to adults access to library materials which address homosexuality: providing that private sexual practices may be

considered non-job factors in public employment; and providing a severability clause.

The struggle, the fury surrounding Proposition 1 in Idaho rises up from a larger and deeper issue, the differences between the religious right and those who are not or no longer fundamentalist. It is possible that the fight over Proposition 1 and similar laws heralds the appearances of religious wars.

It was into this environment that I unwittingly, ignorantly, walked three weeks ago. The English Department of the University of Idaho had hired me to teach a two-week intensive course and, during that time, to present a reading of my fictional work.

This reading was held three days after my teaching began.

Unbeknownst to me, the play had begun prior to my reading at UI. Prior to my arrival, some of the literature professors and the Dean had discussed whether

guards should be present at my performance. However, when I asked the professor who was "in charge of me" if there would be any problem if I publicly read material that was explicitly sexual, he replied, "Of course not. The more, the merrier." So to speak.

I shall read you some briefs excerpts from the review of my performance written by one of the school newspaper's editors:

An interesting fact is that we are in the midst of the 'Banned Books Week.' Not only should this author's books be banned, but the author herself as well.

I was not forewarned that this reading would be highly offensive with many references to lesbian sexual encounters (something I know nothing about and would have preferred to keep that way).

According to the review, my major sins were that I used the words "c-" and "f-" (that's how they were printed in all the newspapers), that I depicted a lesbian love, and that my narrative was difficult to follow. A difficult read, or listen, is not a proper commodity. I say the word "sin" carefully; after my reading, a student accused me of being possessed by demons.

Two days later, the editor-in-chief of the same school newspaper interviewed me and letters of protest deluged the paper; then letters protesting the letters of protest began to appear; one result of all this was that the major newspaper in that area of the world, *The Lewiston Tribune*,

picked up the story. They spent the week interviewing me; the day I left town, probably fortunately for me, huge colored photos of me accompanied an equally colored interview, an interview with a pornographer (that's me), all over the front page of the "Entertainment" section. Dolly Parton occupied the back page.

I shall return, not to this story which I've somewhat lightly told, but to its matter, the matter of the story, by a circuitous route. I want to discuss the poet's relation to his or her society; I want to discuss precisely, though briefly, one type of poet or fiction writer-to-society relation, that of marginalization; I want to discuss one place where this marginalization began. Then, I will turn to the present, to our present; I will look at the poet or fiction writer now, at his or her relation to society, at this marginalization now. Finally, I want to place literary marginalization today in the context of, for instance, Proposition 1 in Idaho.

I shall begin by speaking of the literary lineage to which my own writing is closest; I shall trace the beginnings of marginalization there:

Born in 1821, Charles Baudelaire, fearing the economic and social power of a burgeoning bourgeois society, directly and indirectly posited the poet as he (in those days, they didn't say "she") as he who cannot and must not bear this society. As he who does not seek to please and entertain a rich patron, as heretofore, but rather as he who chooses in his writing and in his life, in

every way possible, to be unlike, to defy.

In his prose poem "Anywhere Out of the World" (translated by Arthur Symons), Baudelaire is talking with his own soul. Baudelaire begins this dialogue; he states that "Life is a hospital." But he wants to please his soul, so he searches for places of safety, geographies, where his soul may enjoy residing. After all, there must be something, somewhere, in this world that can give his soul pleasure. The soul is not interested; the soul does not want any of this. I will go anywhere, finally replies the soul, "anywhere as long as it be out of this world."

Baudelaire in his poetry entered an artistic society in which literature was written with consummate irony, with elegance, in order to please, even to educate, those whose taste was impeccable. The upper-middle classes. Again, Baudelaire:

I...saw the city as from a tower:
Hospital, brothel, prison, and
such hells.

This is the city he desires, not the gathering-place of the rich, the educated, the Parnassians, the literati, for he continues, "I love thee, infamous city! Harlots and/ Hunted have pleasures of their own to give/ the vulgar herd can never understand."

Born in 1854, Arthur Rimbaud deepened and broadened Baudelaire's distaste for society. Cast out even by the rebel poets whom he had sought, this kid turned directly against every possible social and political position, against

the liberals of his time as well as the tyrants, against both "Masters and workers." Here is Rimbaud the slacker in his "Bad Blood": "I have a horror of all trades. Masters and workers—base peasants all..."

Not content with economical distinctions, Rimbaud attacks literature, "The hand that guides the pen is worth the hand that guides the plough.—What an age of hands! I shall never have my hand." Here's a description of literary praxis, of literary structure! I shall never have any hand!

"But who gave me so perfidious a tongue," the kid continues, "that it has guided and guarded my indolence till now? Without ever making use of my body for anything and lazier than the toad, I have lived everywhere. Not a family in Europe that I do not know. —I mean families like my own that owe everything to the Declaration of the Rights of Man. I have known all the sons of respectable families" (trans. by Louise Varese).

Remember, Rimbaud's mother was a religious fanatic.

Both Baudelaire and Rimbaud posited themselves as writers against a society of power. They saw themselves, writers, as dandies, friends of whores, slackers, as anything but powerful.

ARTAUD OR OUR TOAD

The most alienated of all western poets, Antonin Artaud. Rhymes with Rimbaud.

Artaud has shown us that to be a poet is to be more than marginal, it is to be alienated from our society to the point of madness.

Artaud has shown us that the political structure of this society is inextricably tied to the structure of that which first socializes, the structure of the family:

This child/kid,

Artaud wrote,

he isn't there
he's only an angle,

remember the Oedipal triangle or
The Holy Trinity,

he's only an angle...that's
about to happen as yet there's
no angle,

Listen to Artaud's madness, to
the ways in which, here, he connects
his personal suffering to the
political world:

this world of mother-father is
justly that which must go
away.
for this is the world of split-in-
two
in a state of constant disunion
also willing constant unifica-
tion...

In this passage, Artaud is discussing how the political structure shapes and defines identity.

This political structure, this world of mother-father, Artaud concludes,

is turning the whole system of
the world
malignantly sustained by the
most sombre organization.

Now discussing a fellow mad artist, Artaud comments,

One can speak of the good mental health of Van Gogh who, in his whole life, cooked only one of his hands and did nothing else except to cut off his left ear,

in a world in which every day one eats vagina cooked in green sauce or penis of newborn child whipped and beaten to a pulp...

What, we must ask, is this *good health* that Van Gogh maintained? What is the good health of artists who live at the margin, the margins of society, the margin between sanity and madness?

Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their groundbreaking text, *Anti-Oedipus*, recalling the writings of Antonin Artaud, recalling Antonin Artaud, state, "Madness need not be all breakdown. It may be breakthrough." Like Artaud, they analyze madness by situating it in the larger, political world:

What is at stake is not merely art or literature. For either the artistic machine, the analytic machine, and the revolutionary machine will remain in extrinsic relationships that make them function in the deadening framework of the system of social and psychic repression, or they will become parts and cogs of one another in the flow that feeds one and the same desiring machine (trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane).

In this passage, Deleuze and

Guatteri are discussing schizophrenia, the schizophrenia, for instance, that must result when the art body is separated from the political body. Schizophrenia is that which stops the flow. How can this unhealthy, repressive because repressed, stoppage be overcome? Talking about Van Gogh, Artaud asks, "How can one get through this wall?"

Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Artaud and their ilk viewed their writing, every aspect, content and structure, because their very lives, life-decisions, as politically defined. Where are we, we who are born from these poets, at present?

THE PRESENT

At this moment in the United States, there are six major literary publishing houses, two or three mid-range ones, and a large number of small-press. Since the book-chain stores, who are increasingly dominating that market, buy mainly from the six large publishing houses, those publishers monopolize distribution. Not only distribution. The major publishing houses have both immense publicity budgets and equal access to major media.

Generally, the majors, whose interest is increasingly in sales, publish only those fictional and poetic texts written according to certain rules, regulations governing structure, style and language, texts written in order to sell.

A close friend of mine, a poet, said to me that, when she began establishing herself as a writer, she did not want to make and

compose according to the rules of literary commodity, that she wished to find out how she wanted to write. She desired to find her own structures, thus contents. She chose, for there seemed to her to be no other choice, to work and to live outside the literary commodity system; she chose to be an "experimental" writer.

"Only in this way," says Carla, "can I write as I please, as I must."

Carla understood and understands that, in this country, "experimental" equals "marginal." That no one, meaning none of the major publishing houses nor the book-chain stores, wants "experimental" work. Even though those publishing conglomerates have recently been experiencing serious financial problems.

I am not attempting to analyze literary capitalism; I only wish to make the following two points:

First. The equation "experimental writing" equals "marginal writing" need not be a true equation. Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*, as "experimental" a text as any when it first appeared, was and is certainly not marginal to certain formations in this society. It is the major publishing houses, the book-chain stores, and the connected media, in search of larger profits, who are maintaining, are reifying the split between commercial and non-commercial or "experimental" literature. They are telling us, teaching us to read only that fiction and poetry whose structures, the structures of commodity, support the status quo. Nonetheless, the kids, my students, perhaps yours,

when they do read on their own, go for books by William Burroughs, by theorists such as Michel Foucault and Teresa di Laurentis; the kids, my students, *want* to read texts which are difficult, disjunctive, not "a good read."

Second, I'm going to return to my friend, Carla, the poet. She explains that she prefers to remain in the non-commercial (the bohemian, the experimental) world, for there she is safe. Safe to be able to write as she sees fit. Safe because her audience, though small, strongly supports her work. She does not encounter the religious right in Idaho.

In other words, it is not only the major publishing houses who support the "experimental" equals "marginal" equation. It is the "experimental" writers themselves, for they have and are internalizing the literary conventions and restrictions that support the status quo. By internalizing these definitions and expectations, by accepting literary and

personal marginalization, the non-commercial writer denies the political realities surrounding and underlying his or her literary choices.

Back to Idaho. My non-private Idaho. To be marginal is to be on a margin. Fortunately or unfortunately, the religious right is putting the margin—that desperate balancing act—out of business. There are no longer any safe places in our world. Innocence will soon be dead: the writer who chooses to write in ways that do not support the status quo can no longer rest in elitism but, as was the case with Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Artaud, must make clear the reasons for writing as she or he does, must make those reasons which are also and always political positions, present.

And finally as always, Artaud, Artaud talking about another mad author, the Comte de Lautreamont: "Because people were afraid that their poetry would escape from their books and overthrow reality..."

SHORT STORY

PERMANENCE

Vincent Zandri

The problem is my heart. I thought it would break when doctor poured a glass of water from the pitcher on his desk. Running water is the sound I remember best—and worst—about baby. Water is the last sound I remember coming from the bathtub when baby died, five months ago.

For five months now I've been required to see doctor once a week, whether I want to or not; whether I need to or not. So here's what I do to doctor to get my money's worth; I ask him to tell me about someone whose life seems worse than my own. If it isn't about a bad marriage or a tragic death, I tell him, then make it just plain miserable so I don't feel so bad.

Doctor begins to tell me about a man so convinced of being trapped inside his body, he overdosed on aspirin. But the aspirin, he says, did not have the hoped-for effect. The man's body was so large it absorbed the drugs without killing him. The fat man tried hanging himself, but couldn't find rope strong enough. He tried gassing himself with the oven, but the appliance was electric.

"Listen," insists doctor. "The fat man stayed alive in spite of himself."

Maybe a story about giving up a life is *too* miserable, because I force a smile from the corner of my mouth, but doctor doesn't. After five months of seeing this doctor, I know this: doctor is never in a smiling mood. So I do this to avoid looking at his face: I stand up from the leather patient's couch, walk to the window and stare outside at the rain coming down against the pavement in the empty parking lot.

"All right then," I say. "Give me a miserable story with a *happy* ending."

"What you want, Mary," says doctor, "is a parable."

I see doctor's face reflected in the glass of the window. The face is a blurry, indifferent face. He pulls at his beard with his fingers and picks at his nose gently, with forefinger and thumb, like he's not really picking. He lifts the glass of water from his desk. He stares into it for a moment. He sets the glass down without taking a drink.

"Okay," he says. "How's *this* for a happy ending? This is what I did to make the fat man regain control: I convinced him that his body was not his real enemy, that

a person obsessed with exercise—a person who cannot live without Jane Fonda or Lean Cuisine—is the person truly trapped inside his body.”

Doctor sits up straight in his burgundy colored leather chair. He extends his arms to me. His eyes widen.

“Don’t you get it?” he asks. “I made the man feel so good about himself, he was able to stop eating. He lost one-hundred-fifty pounds in twelve months. No fad diets, no grueling exercise. Just mind over matter. He was free again. He was happy.”

When doctor finishes his story he takes a deep drink of water. Too deep. He chokes and coughs. He coughs until his eyes water. He coughs until his face turns red. Till he chokes. Doctor holds to his throat. I stand helpless, watching doctor drown. I want to call the receptionist. But this is late Friday afternoon. The receptionist is already gone for the weekend. The reason doctor makes me come here on Friday afternoons is that his receptionist leaves us alone.

The coughing stops. Doctor is a lucky doctor. He catches his air, regains his composure. The colorless pallor returns to his face. He does not drown in the water poured from the pitcher. He is bent slightly at the waist, his face over his desk. He opens his arms to me and waves me away, as if to say, Don’t worry, I’m not dying. Not yet.

“Are you all right?” I ask.

“Wrong pipe,” he exclaims with a hoarse voice, on the verge of choking once more. Doctor must be embarrassed, because doctor

forces a smile. Barely. But this time the person not smiling is *me*.

I turn away from the window and the rain outside making small puddles on the blacktop. I brush my jacket with my open hand, straighten my skirt, run my fingers through my hair to make it neat and flat. I see doctor absorbed in the gray light coming from the window. He is like a century old character posing for an antique photograph. I go to him. I reach across his desk for the pack of cigarettes. I knock over the pitcher of water. Water spills across the desk, over the papers. I swallow my breath. My heart pounds. Doctor springs back in his chair, produces a handkerchief from his pocket, all in one startled motion.

“Don’t worry,” he says, patting at the puddle soaking into the papers scattered across his desk. I can see the papers are from my file. The ink from the papers is already beginning to smear. My name is floating away in a wave of blue ink.

“Nothing to get worried about,” doctor tells me. He is back to his frowning expression. But I know he is only doing his job. For instance, part of doctor’s job is to tell me not to worry.

Here’s what I do in the face of worry: I pop a cigarette in my mouth—the first since baby died—and doctor quickly emerges with a light from his Zippo.

Listen, this is not the kind of doctor who will tell you to quit smoking. He is the kind of doctor that has closely cropped hair, a salt and pepper beard, and an old loose fitting double breasted suit.

Doctor is a heavy smoker.

I take a puff of the cigarette and exhale through my nose. I breathe the way I recall. I look at the desk and the ink stained, nameless papers. Doctor will never recover from the water on his desk. There will always be the dark, gray water stain. The stain will be forever. I know this about water because baby and I know about the things water can do.

Later on, doctor asks me if I can hear the rain spattering against the pavement, outside the window.

"Isn't it romantic?" he asks. He is running his hands against my back when we lie together on the patient's couch.

"Yes," I lie. "I'm listening to the rain."

What I do not tell him is that I listen to nothing. Even though I hear him, I do not listen to doctor speak. Not like this. What I want is his touch, the way I remember being touched. I come to this doctor because I need to remember something other than baby. But as doctor brings his bearded face to mine and kisses me, I do not forget about baby. I remember baby in a way I do not want. When the rain falls to the earth outside the window of doctor's office and my back is squeezed against the leather of the patient's couch, I am remembering baby in a way that breaks my heart.

I am frightened of riding in elevators.

So I listen to the sound my footsteps make when I climb the concrete stairs to my apartment after my twentieth Friday afternoon session with doctor. This is the same staircase Jamie, baby

and I climbed—dare I say it?—once upon a time. Before baby passed away and before Jamie left me. Once upon a time, Jamie would have asked me this question: "Do we have to take the stairs, Mary?"

Now I am left to climb these concrete stairs alone. Footsteps are the loudest sound I hear. So is the noise the key makes when it unlocks the dead bolt. The tumblers that fall inside the lock are not comforting sounds. The metallic latch snapping back does not mimic the Welcome Wagon Song. I wonder if these are the sounds I am supposed to be hearing at twenty-nine years old. Maybe I should be listening to the sound of baby crying, or Jamie bobbing baby up and down the way I taught him—with two hands, one hand cradling baby's body and the other behind his head—trying to make baby laugh, trying to stop the tears that would run warm and wet from baby's cheeks onto our hands.

Hearing the sounds that I hear now means this: I am alone. Alone is not the way I had planned my life.

My apartment is as dark as night. Inside, I stumble over cardboard boxes. I turn on the light switch next to the front door. I see the boxes. The boxes have been taped closed with duct tape. The boxes are not for me. The boxes are marked, "JAMIE" in big bold Magic Marker letters. The boxes are for him. There are five boxes in all, scattered about the apartment. The boxes have been here since Jamie

left. The boxes contain the last of Jamie's things. I have been using the boxes as tables until Jamie comes to get them. I rest newspapers, magazines, dishes, even dirty laundry against them. The boxes are not for me, but they have made life convenient for me since Jamie left.

I use the box closest to the fire place, the one filled with Jamie's engineering manuals, to stand on. It helps me see the photographs on the mantle above the fireplace. Jamie's photograph is resting where it always has. The photograph is, or should I say *was*, my favorite. A small black and white, taken before baby was born, the photo is of Jamie standing barefoot on a stretch of a deserted Cape Cod beach sometime in the late Fall. The image is Jamie from behind so that you cannot see his face, only the back of his head. The photo was taken one short life-time ago, literally. There is the ocean in the background, so much water in the blurry distance. In the photograph the water is white capped and angry. You can see the waves breaking. You can see the sand gathering at Jamie's feet in the wind, like a snow drift. Jamie's photograph is the kind of photograph that provokes thought rather than a grin. The kind of photograph worth showing off, but I'm not sure why. I suppose the photo helps me to remember Jamie in a way I want to—without seeing his face.

The photo of Jamie is one of many positioned on the mantle. For instance, there is a picture of me carrying a load

of firewood into a cabin we rented one weekend in the mountains above Lake Placid. Look. I tried to appear natural for the photograph by looking away from the camera.

Listen: the whole thing was posed.

I can still hear Jamie protesting from behind the camera: "Pretend I'm not here. Pretend I don't exist." Do you know how difficult it is pretending your husband does not exist?

Here's a photo of Jamie with ax in hand. He is chopping the wood I would later carry into the cabin. This is an action photo. You can see Jamie coming down hard with the ax into the log. There is a pile of split birch on either side of him. Behind him, the lake appears as a small blur through the trees.

At night, when Jamie and I would sit in front of the fire, we could hear the noises that came from the lake when the animals gathered there. Jamie held my hand, looked into my eyes and told me the lake was trying to speak to us.

"Listen," Jamie would say. "You can hear it."

The sounds, high pitched, rhythmic, distant. The sounds were lonely sounds. Like babies crying in the night. That weekend, Jamie and I were alone in the woods with no one else around for miles.

"No distractions," Jamie said.

The weekend in the cabin was the weekend Jamie and I made baby.

• • •

This is the first photo ever of me cradling baby. This is the day we brought baby home from the hospital to our apartment. This is a happy photo. Looking at it now, I can see how nervous I was with baby in my arms. I can still feel the nerves inside my stomach, constricting, tightening. Baby was brand new. Baby's head was round and fuzzy on top, his skin was dark but flushed (yellowed with jaundice). His eyes were closed, his face was scrunched (like a skinned rabbit, Jamie said). His hands were already opening and closing into fists. That's how strong baby was. I'm smiling in the picture, but I'm also holding on tight. This was not a pose. I was acting natural. Baby was so smooth, so tiny, I thought there was nothing to prevent baby from falling right through my arms.

Look. My face tells it all.

In my face you can see how happy I am. But scared too. That kind of photo.

For baby, the fire place mantle is like "This is your life!" The photographs are everywhere. Here's baby swinging, baby crawling, baby rolling over, baby playing in the snow with his father. Here's baby eating spaghetti, baby covered with spaghetti, baby soaking in the bathtub.

Eventually, there is no more baby.

Sometimes I wish I could shrink myself, fit myself right inside the photographs. I wish I could relive the happy moments. You see, the smiling faces in these images are permanent. For instance, our

wedding photo, the one with Jamie and me standing in front of the big tree at the country club, hasn't changed in years. As always, it hangs above the bed in the bedroom. This is the photo with our arms around one another: me dressed in billowing white, Jamie in conservative blue blazer and egg-shell trousers. We seem like children. And we were. We have these smiling baby faces that now seem like a bad joke.

Listen, I admit it: Not everything in my life is permanent. Not abandoned stretches of Cape Cod beach, not weekends in the mountains, not weddings or even marriages. Not even baby.

When I want to turn on my imagination, I'll turn off all the lights in my apartment and sit in the dark. I can hear myself living, literally. I hear my lungs expand, my brain buzz. I hear my heart beat the same way you can hear your pulse through your pillow at night, when you try to sleep.

Sometimes, if the night is especially dark, I sit and think about the way things used to be for all three of us. There was the abrupt alarm of baby's first cries and startled voice of Jamie having popped his head up from the bed. "Baby's crying," he'd say. "Who's going to get baby?"

I remember midnight feedings and the feel of baby's chin up against my own and the low, soft, snoring sound Jamie would make next to me in bed. Only moments before he might have mumbled something to me about staying

awake with me, stay awake the entire time. Then his head would sink inside his pillows with the bedroom dark, other than a lamp in the hallway spreading enough light for me to see but not enough to keep baby or Jamie awake.

I remember baby singing a jumbled up song from inside his playpen. I remember the sound of Sesame Street on the television in the afternoon. I remember watching Sesame Street with more interest than baby. Those were the sounds of my life. I remember the distinctive low murmur of Jamie's car pulling up outside of our apartment building. I remember the sound of Jamie's key inside the lock of our front door. Even now I can hear the door open. I can see it in the pitch dark of my imagination. I can see Jamie coming through the door, dropping his briefcase to the floor and lifting baby out of his playpen. I can hear the crumpled up, ticklish laugh of baby. I can see it, hear it, feel it, the way I remember.

The way it used to be for us was noisy and crowded inside our small apartment—pots on the stove with food cooking, bottles sterilizing in boiling water, the television going with no one watching, newspapers scattered and baby's toys underfoot. And you know, that's the way Jamie and I wanted it. That's the way we always thought living would be like when they snapped the photograph of us in front of the big tree on our wedding day. Family. Maybe we weren't conscious of it, but I'm sure that's what we

were thinking. Family. That's what we should have been thinking. Family should have been the reason for the smiles.

I want to believe Jamie left me because baby was gone. I want to believe Jamie never stopped loving me. I want to believe this: when there was suddenly two of us again, the silence that consumed our lives was unbearable for Jamie.

For starters, our apartment was too neat. We rarely cooked anything. We ate out. There were no pots boiling, no food cooking. There was no watching out for baby underfoot. There was a clean, sanitized smell in the apartment.

There were no sounds of baby crying in the night to wake Jamie and me from a restless sleep. No bottles to heat, no diapers to change. Things got so quiet, we couldn't sleep anymore. That kind of quiet.

Maybe Jamie would suddenly raise his hand to the ceiling and shout, "Somebody make some noise. For God's sake, somebody make some goddamned noise."

Here's a brief story about silence.

Two weeks to the day had passed since Jamie and I last saw baby. Two weeks passed that seemed—you guessed it—like an eternity. The dinner I prepared that night, I remember, was Jamie's favorite—meat-loaf with melted cheese, frozen green-beans boiled, baked potato wrapped in tin foil, smothered in butter. Everything was just the way Jamie liked it. But time went

by and it got very late. Soon there was only one plate in the oven, already fixed—a dried out portion of meat-loaf, a shriveled potato and a pile of soggy green-beans. On the counter, next to the sink, was another plate with the remnants of my dinner—food half-eaten, shifted from one area of the plate to another.

The time went by, consciously.

At nine o'clock, I was sitting on the couch, dressed in Jamie's pajamas—oversized flannel tops and bottoms. The volume was down on the television. There was no sound. With the clicker, I changed the picture every few seconds. MTV, CNN, television shopping, Hillary Rodham Clinton addressing a crowd of reporters from a Washington podium. A car pulled up. There were muffled voices coming from unrecognizable persons. I heard the door to the vestibule open. The door opened abruptly and loud. The door knocked against the plaster wall behind it. The slam echoed inside the concrete stairwell. Awkward footsteps shuffled against the ceramic tile in the vestibule. I heard the car speed away and the music from the car going loud. The thump, thump, thump, of a bass drum dissipated with the distance, until it disappeared completely, leaving only the reckless abandon of my husband. The front door slammed shut and a set of keys fell to the floor, inside the entrance-way.

"Shit," I heard Jamie say. From two floors down, his voice passed through me like a razor blade through my spine.

More footsteps and then there

was the sound of Jamie punching the wall. He was punching the elevator recall button. The elevator was out again. My pulse was pounding inside of my head. Three sharp punches followed and with each punch Jamie's voice became more desperate—"shit... shit...shit."

I was paralyzed on the couch. I should have helped my husband make it to the door. Somehow, waiting was better. He made the stairs, slowly, one step at a time, his heels clicking against the concrete with each step. One at a time. One after the other.

When Jamie came to the door, I got up from the couch. I went to the door. I opened it. Jamie's tie was loose, his shirt was unbuttoned to the middle of his chest. He was smiling. He was swaying. He did not have his briefcase. He did not have his keys. He had a strong, sour smell.

I led my husband to the couch, sat him down. He sat down hard. Outside, the wind picked up against the window. It was not raining. Jamie and I said nothing. But then, we said everything.

Then Jamie's head bobbed up and down again. Eventually, Jamie laid his chin on his chest. Jamie was sleeping. I started to cry, hard. Tears ran into my mouth. Jamie raised his head quickly. His eyes opened. He saw that I was crying. In the two weeks that baby was gone, I hadn't cried as hard as I was crying at that very moment.

Jamie smiled.

"Good," he said. "That's...good." And then he passed out.

• • •

Most of the time, Jamie drank. He rarely came home in time for dinner, even if I had taken the time to prepare it. When he did come home, Jamie was not really home. He was some place else entirely, as if his body were there on the couch in front of the television, but his soul had taken residence somewhere else. He wouldn't talk. Hardly a word. Only the necessities. He wouldn't open up. He was silent. Here's the funny part about silence: Jamie couldn't stand how silent our lives had become without baby.

Jamie stopped reading the newspaper. He paid special attention to the television. He drank at home. At night, we shared the same bed, but Jamie wouldn't sleep with me.

I'm not completely naive, you know. I'm not blaming Jamie. I couldn't expect Jamie to keep on loving me when it just wasn't possible. I couldn't expect him to be the same person, to risk anymore of the love he lost on baby. That kind of love would have been asking for too much.

I am not without guilt. I can not help thinking this: Jamie blames me for baby's life. Because I was the last to be with baby; because it was me who left baby alone in the tub, for one fragile moment.

With Jamie gone now, I'm less likely to keep the apartment in order. There is the dirty, soiled laundry I've allowed to just pile up. There are dishes encrusted with food,

stacked inside the sink. The clean, sanitized smell has disappeared. There is the unopened, unanswered mail on top of baby's high chair, the one with Woodstock and Snoopy on the backrest. The stale remnants of a peanut-butter and jelly sandwich rest against the coffee table in the living room from two nights ago, when I couldn't sleep. Newspapers are left unread, piled on top of the dining room table and against the boxes marked "Jamie." In the bedroom there is the answering machine with the blinking, red light, indicating voice messages left for me—messages that will remain unanswered. I know this without trying to find out: doctor's been calling to remind me of my Friday appointments. And this: Jamie's been calling again. My ex-husband Jamie wants to organize a time when I will not be home, so that he can take more of *our* things out of here.

You see, Jamie doesn't want to see me.

And you know what? I won't let him come here without seeing me. Seeing me will not be difficult. I rarely leave this place now, except when I have to. I leave for my weekly one hour with doctor. I leave for food. I leave on Sundays to see God. I do not leave for work at the travel agency anymore. I do not have the heart to book open-water cruises, or beach-side vacations. I can only handle the inland vacations, far away from water. I prefer hotels without pools or bathroom spas. I prefer booking trips that no one else prefers: Arizona desert hikes or long drives through Nebraska,

where it's safe. So the travel agency has stopped calling me.

Now I do not work. Now Jamie and I live on life insurance, but the life we live on is no longer with us.

There is one thing I've gained, even though I've never cared enough to have it. I have freedom. I can do anything I want, whenever I want. Now I have a choice.

Tonight, this is what I choose to do with my freedom: I'll stop looking at these photographs. I'll start the bath. I'll listen for the water filling the tub. The bath has a familiar sound. The sound of running water is the sound I remember most from after supper. After supper was my favorite time, with "Wheel of Fortune" going on the television and Jamie ignoring it, already asleep on the couch, still in shirt and tie, hidden behind a newspaper with the smell of dinner disappearing along with the light of day.

Corny, but true.

The bath is what I remember best and worst about baby. I had become an expert with baby's bath. I was used to running the water at just the right temperature, used to filling the basin to just the right depth so that baby wasn't in danger. What I didn't know was what could happen to baby in just a few inches of water.

That night there were just a few inches of water in the tub. Baby was laughing, playing with the water that came from the spout with his tiny hands. What happened to baby should not have happened at all. Baby was

old enough to sit up on his own. I had a cigarette burning in the kitchen. I took just enough time for a couple of drags. Just one fragile moment. In and out, in and out, and it was all over.

As I smoked I stood away from the kitchen in the doorway of baby's nursery, so I could hear him. The warning wasn't any kind of warning you might expect. There were no sounds of the drowning victim, no flailing arms or kicking feet. There was only silence and the steady noise of water filling the tub from the water spout. And baby? My God, the still, floating lifeless sight of baby would have broken your heart.

Tonight, running bath-water is the loudest sound I hear. Listen: running water is the only sound I hear. I sit at the edge of my tub and close my eyes. I give myself a test. I dip my hands into the water, swish it around a little. I guess, one-hundred-thirty-one, one-hundred-thirty-three degrees. I am a mother, an expert on acquiring just the right temperature, just the right depth. I open my eyes, take baby's Big Bird thermometer from beneath the sink, dip it into the water. The mercury rises. The mercury reads one-hundred-thirty degrees. Not bad, I think. I still have it. After all this time.

I am fully clothed. The bathwater is not for me. The bathwater was for baby—for his life and for his death. I gave baby both.

Baby's nursery is just the way Jamie and I left it. Rather, baby's nursery is

just the way *baby* left it. Baby's nursery is right next door to the bath. I can listen for the sound of the bath, from where I stand inside the doorway. This is also the place where I waited until I stopped hearing baby.

Tonight I sit inside baby's nursery. Tonight I sit in the dark. I listen for the sound of a blanket shuffling or a crib creaking. Sometimes the sound becomes so real for me in the dark—so loud—I think baby might wake up. Only the noise is not really baby noise. The noise is the wind against the window, or the rain against the roof. The noise is my heart beating. The noise is replaced with silence and the silence will not go away.

I have some problems now. My ex-husband, Jamie, is one of them. There are others. For instance, I cannot ride in elevators. Get this: I'm not afraid of stopping; I'm not frightened of getting stuck in one place. I think getting stuck would be kind of nice, kind of permanent. What I afraid of is that once I get to the top, the whole thing will just let go and tumble to the bottom.

So I see doctor now. Doctor will help me with my fear. Fear, he says, is part of his job.

I have this freedom I did now ask for; freedom I never planned on having. Tonight I will use the freedom to let the bathtub overflow onto the floor, to make the noise that fills the empty silence in baby's room.

SHORT STORY

HUMMERS

Tom Deiker

Did you ever hold a wild bird in your hands, one that was hurt, but still that bird tried to fly away? So you put one hand over it, soft-like? Remember how it felt, all skittery an' warm, like life itself was rolled up in that ball of feathers? It's heart going so fast you thought it might pop. Well, imagine that inside. Like that. Skittery, and warm. That's how it feels. And that little heart beating like their wings when they buzz by—fwzzzz!—makes your own heart go faster tryin' to catch up. They're the smallest birds in the world, you know. In the *National Geographic* they showed one next to a pencil. That small. Small as an eraser on a pencil! 'Course mine are all ruby throats. But still.

When I was young 'n pretty I had to use 'em to keep the smart alecks away. If a guy started to get fresh, I'd wave my arms the way I did in the show, either side of his face, like this:

"The hummingbirds are watchin'! They're gonna get you! Be nice or they'll peck out your eyes, hummers'll suck your brains out through your ears!"

That made them wise up.

Bein' pretty was no advantage. Glad I'm not pretty any more. It's

the worst kind of han-dicap, 'cause it's so easy to hide behind pretty. Least that's what Stoney used to say. You put your mind on pretty, he says, 'steada life. And pretty don't last. So life passes you by.

Now, no one ever called Stoney pretty. Can't believe you never seen him. Not even a picture? Here, this's him. That's on the beach in Biloxi. He don't get any prettier'n that. He had this lady did those shirts, paid her a bunch, all hand sewn with pearl snap-buttons.

See here on his hands? He learned how to tattoo on himself. Crummy little stars like punks do with a sewin' needle. And his hands all knobby. He'd tell a mark, "Feel my muscle if you don't think I can take care of myself." Skin 'n bones, that's what they'd feel!

Most people thought he was a midget. If they called him a midget or a dwarf, well that was his favorite joke. He'd get those bony arms to shakin', turn red in the face—like he was about to have a con-niption fit.

"I'm not a midget! I'm not a midget!" he shouts, "I'm...a *cripple!*" Right, that was Stoney doing like the Elephant Man. Then he'd laugh with that wheezy laugh he's got, till it makes him start in coughin'. Buffaloed 'em every time.

No, I don't mean imagined. I mean felt. I'm *not* trying to argue with you. I'm just telling you how they feel. You gotta understand about tattoos. You always got a tattoo with you. Like Stoney used to say, "Once it's there, you got to

show it to St. Peter." Sailors would come an' have him tattoo a rooster on one foot and a pig on the other. That's so they won't die by drowning. They'd be laughing it off, but you could tell they believe it deep down. He never said. I always figured it's 'cause they don't go near the ocean. Or bikers, they'd get a cobra or a panther, or maybe a dragon. For courage. You get the idea? There's a power there. That's the way it was for me. 'Cept for me, how I felt, it's like a power *inside*.

Stoney showed me how to pose and turn around, how to sashay, to look like the hummers were moving. What a sight, Stoney doing a belly dancer! But there wasn't nothin' on my arms and I liked to move them, too. So I had him put these here on my arms, so when I move my arms they'd look like they was flying.

There was other tattooed women, of course: Betty Broadbent, Louise Williams, Mildred Hall, Lorette Fulkerson—Stoney did a coupla' Louise Williams' tattoos—but Stoney says they couldn't compare. Lorette says she has 265 tattoos, but I seen her and there's no way. But me, I was a regular work of art. In the bally show Stoney pulled 'em in like this:

"You heard of the tattooed lady folks but here's a work of art a beautiful orphan rescued from the white slave trade whose body has been adorned with works of art by the world's greatest tattoo artist and you will see it all she is a work of art from head to toe and ever' where in between."

He always had to throw in a hook! The world's greatest tattoo artist was Stoney himself, of course. Some talker, he was. Could

sell eggs to a chicken farmer.

When Stoney and the Cole Carnival come to Buckhannon, we lived near Hodgesville. That's six miles up from Buckhannon. But only four miles walkin', 'cause we lived on the Buckhannon side. I was almost 16, and about to bust. Already knowing I'd leave first chance I got. If I ever got a chance. Then here's Stoney kidding about makin' me a famous circus star. Only time I ever seen him speechless was that first time, when I says, "Sure," I says. Lydia, my best friend, she's with me, she lets out a holler, nearly drops dead. And Stoney, his mouth's open like he swallowed a kitten.

Once he gets over the shock Stoney says come on if I wasn't afraid to work, says there wouldn't be nothin' but meals till I prove myself. Said I was probably a forty-miler. That's somebody who gets it in their head to join the circus, but gets homesick before they're forty miles from home.

Well, I showed 'em all. I packed and unpacked and cleaned cages and sewed costumes and drove tent stakes and set up the ten-in-one and the banners, and took tickets and cooked in the cook-house. I even learned the tattoo business, shaved more men than a barber—arms and backs and chests. Took care of his machines and stencils, even learned to outline.

When I close my eyes and remember, it's the smells come first, strongest: this tent, all rained on and muddied up, over and over, to where it always has this here smell. Can you smell it? Seems like all the smell from every town we pass through gets into this ol' tent, and stays with us. Each town, its got

its own smell. That's a fact. Some's dry 'n dusty like an old car rustin' in the weeds. Others' closed up and molderin' like a attic. And some fresh as new clothes washed in rainwater. And they mix in with our smells, circus smells—caramel apples and popcorn, cotton candy and Polish sausage, animal smells. And the smell of carnis—sweat rubbed into everything: the costumes, the trailers, the make-up boxes, the ropes 'n tents. Sawdust on the floor smellin' like a Christmas tree—wood chips really, not what most people call sawdust.

That was another one of Stoney's sayin's. "I can't get the sawdust out of my shoes," he'd say. Oh, Lordy! Look at me, I'm gonna cry again! Whooy!

Never. Not once. Those people, they're just watching the show. Stoney and me, we were *in* it. Ever notice how sometimes a thing can be the opposite of how it seems? Like being pretty. Or being a carnis. You ask people what they think about carnis, why they got to lock up their kids and liquor before they answer. Then they proceed to tell you what lowlifes we are—drunks 'n freaks 'n perverts. But you ought to see it from up there on the platform. Whenever I see one of them young girls—one cotton dress to her name, dreamin' about prince charming—I want to grab her and shake her. First thing you know she's moved out of her shack and into prince charming's, then got her own mess of kids before she's even a growned woman. It *is* sort of white slavery. When you come from plain folks and got no silver spoon in your mouth, you got to go out and grab a piece 'a life, not just set on your porch waitin' for it.

Sometimes when we get to a new town, I take the truck in to get supplies. I always stop at the cafe. That's my bally show. That means free, the one we put on to get you into the tent. That's the real bally show, right there in that cafe, you follow me? How much they're givin' for soy beans at the grain elevator. Whether the weather's gonna' hold. Whose tractor got stuck in the mud, and how they got it out, and how somebody else thinks they coulda' got it out easier. And every one of 'em scared. Hurtin'. And not able to say it. Academy Award stuff.

Stoney 'n me, we seen it all. He's been to every state in the union and I been to all but a handful. Yah, that's when we ate our sweet bread—summers up North on the circuit, and then we set up a short shop down South for the winter. We had us one in Phenix City, Hopkinsville, Biloxi, Ybor City—that's outside Tam-pa—New Orleans, even Puerto Rico once. Key West, Columbia, you name it. But as soon as the summer come, we'd have to jump on a show. Stoney'd tell people: "I got that calliope in me, Buddy. I just got to hear it."

We been to where you could put your hands 'n feet in four separate states, even Stoney. We been to the top of the world's tallest building. We been down the Onondaga Caves. I seen a tornado, an' a hurricane, an' a train wreck. Even seen a moon rocket go up.

Can't say as there was a *first* time, exactly. First time I remember, I was coming back to this here tent after he died. I just naturally reached down to feel them, knowing they was there from the feel inside. Like they'd always been there. Funny to feel 'em on my skin,

and at the same time from inside. But not at the time. Comforting. No, not a bit. Just tired. I was sitting in this old rockin' chair Stoney always lugs along wherever we go.

What it was, I was staring at the sawdust on the floor. The flap was open and the sun shining on the sawdust. My oh my, it was so bright! Like lookin' at the sun in a mirror. But still I could see every speck 'a dust in the light, like it was its own little world, things was so clear. The light on the sawdust and the smell of the sawdust, and the music and shouting and laughing and the tent flappin', it was all one thing, don't you see? The seat on the rockin' chair, smooth as a church bench, pressing into your legs every time you rock back.

Not at all. Just a part of me, like Stoney's still a part of me, like all the towns we ever been to are a part of me. I can trace 'em with my fingers. If I pet normal, the feathers feel soft and spongy-like. And gentle. If you go against 'em, they're stiff and prickly. I don't know. Would it make a difference? Stoney used to say a thing's as real as you make it. I feel a lot of things I don't ever see. Don't you?

He fought so long to stay on his feet, to keep out of the wheel chair—called it his struggle buggy. It wasn't dying he was afraid of. It was being in a hospital. His folks, they put him in a crippled home once, and he never forgot that. Sickly people, you know, they got to be ready to die anytime. You and me, we put it out of our mind. Stoney, he'd talk about it, make jokes about it. And what a prejudice he had against hypochondriacs. He had no patience with 'em whatsoever. One lady, he told her,

"Ain't nothing wrong with you but you're fat!" That rude. He never knew a hypochondriac who died peaceful, said they was all scared to die. "People who practice dyin' all the time, they're the ones who are scarest." That was how he put it.

His last night, he talked a blue streak. "We gave 'em a run for their money, didn't we, Sunshine?" he says. "Remember the Spirit of New Orleans," he says. I sure did. Stoney loved riding the trains! He'd set himself up in the diner and folks'd gather around to hear him tell those old carni stories. Even Stoney forgot which ones were true and which only shoulda' been true. "Remember the short shop we had in the arcade at Johnson City, when the macaw got in a fight with the ringtail monkey, and then a coyote got loose, all in one day?" I surely did. "Remember there at the Earl Hotel"—that's in Bi-loxi—"when the manager and bellboy put that goat in our room?" We was at the cock fights, and when we came back were we ever surprised.) But Stoney, he was proud, too. You could tell it. I never heard him tell a story so often as he did that one about them putting the goat in his room. Then he says, "Remember when the dopers trashed our place in Ybor City?" I'll never forget that one. Those dopers ran in without warning and held this big gun to my head. Stoney went right to the safe and gave them everything we had. Stoney, tight as a rusted lug nut, goin' straight for the safe! They never woulda' knowed he had that safe. Afterwards he laughed. Laughed! Told me, "Well, Sunshine, that's the way the cookie crumbles. Most the time they're

just kids playing grown-up. But then sometimes it all depends how high they are, who's gonna live or die. But don't it beat Buckhannon?"

"Hodgesville, Stoney!" I says. I was bawlin' like a baby. "Why can't you ever get it straight! It was Hodgesville!" He done that lotsa' times, pretend he forgot where I was from, and when I get mad, like he knows I will, he says: "I can't never remember Hodges-ville. Now Buck-hannon I remember. People heard of Buck-hannon. But Hodgesville, ain't nobody hearda' Hodgesville. Near Buckhannon, was it?"

As usual, by that time I'm laughin', too. "Yah, Stoney, it was near Buckhannon," I says.

Biloxi. Definitely Biloxi. With Stoney it was Tampa, but me it was Biloxi. There at Biloxi, you can walk out near a mile from the beach and not get the top of your feet wet. Like standing on the ocean. Even Stoney. You could walk out a mile, and see porpoises of a morning. One morning there was one washed up on shore. All covered with flies. But, you know, it was still beautiful. Even dead like that. How did it get stuck here on the beach with the whole ocean to swim in, I asked Stoney, not a scratch on it, and not even afraid a sharks? Stoney says they get parasites inside and come up on the shore to get away.

That's what made me come back to Biloxi, after he was gone. It's where the memories are. There's so much life in that Gulf, you don't even need bait. That's a fact. The Vietnamese, they dangle red ribbons with the shiny hooks in 'em with no bait at all, and the pan fish fight to grab on. And the college

boys, with those little anchor hooks, they snag sheephead gnawin' at the barnacles on the pier. The colored people, they scoop up crawfish out of the ditches. And cajuns, they fish with their feet! At night, with lanterns on their heads. Wiggle their toes around in the mud till they scare up a flounder, and then gig it.

Rain or shine, I just got to walk out into the Gulf. Fact is, I like it better when it rains. Even when it's cold. That shivering makes you come alive! Ain't nothin' like it, when you look out, hold up your arms and feel the wet air blowing in from the Gulf, blowing cross the entire continent, says Stoney, blowin' storms all the way to Canada. Often as not it rains. Sometimes you see the lightning off in the distance but don't hear it, sometimes when them thunderheads roll in you hear it but don't see it. Me, I just got to start sashayin'. Wake up my hummingbirds, make 'em earn their keep again.

And when I start in sashayin', they do wake up. They remember the shows. That's a fact. They're looking for the crowd and only seein' the muddy-brown water meet up with the clouds, hard to tell where one ends 'n the other starts up. Like they want to take off across the Gulf. They do that, you know, fly all the way down from Canada, all the way across the Gulf and on down to I don't know where, maybe South America, Lordy, but it's a long way from Hodgesville, out there on the Gulf, with those hummers lifting you up to where you can almost stand on the ocean!

ONE WAY OUT

Edward G. Tienda

Rudy, get up, mijo. Time for school. Ya levantate. You're going to be late again. Rudy!"

Mom's wake up call. "All right, Mom." I pulled the blankets over my head.

"Muy bonito, muy bonito. You see, you shouldn't be running around late." She leaned close, sniffing me. "You were drinking again, verdad, cabrone?"

"All right, already. I'm up." I started for the shower.

She followed, still on me. "You're going to end up like Digo. Is that what you want, Rudy? Is it? Rudy, why don't you see where you're headed? I don't want you dead."

She could keep on for hours. I jumped in and out of the shower. As I ironed my pants, I wondered what the day held for me. Ah shit, a double crease. That's all I needed.

I headed for Rick's. He lives behind my building, upstairs. I rang the bell and his Mom answered.

"Buenos dias, Senora Lopez. Esta Rica?"

"Si, si," she said. "Pasale, Rudy."

Rick's family is from Jalisco.

Real respectful and polite. Very hard workers.

"W'as happening?" I walked into Rick's room, checking out the mess. "You're still in your boxers?"

Rick pointed at my leg with the hot iron. "What's that?"

"What?"

"On your pants."

"What's it look like!"

"Like a double crease." He started laughing.

"Are you ready?" I tried to change the subject.

"Yeah." Rick slipped on his pants and shirt, then slapped on some nasty-smelling cologne.

"Please," I said, "your cucarachas are going to follow us."

Rick and I had to book to Tony's pad to get a ride. Tony don't wait for us. He has to drop off his little sister at school. So we pray to God he's not driving too fast for us to jump into his car.

Tony is todo loco. He has four older brothers always beating on him for no reason. I guess they blame how poor they are on him and his sister, being from different dads and all. I mean, all those beatings really messed him up inside. He's the main reason Rick and I are always throwing chin-gasos with other vatos. Tony starts talking shit, we end up

fighting guys we don't even know.

Tony and his brother, Marcos, are the only ones in their family who work. That's how Tony got his car, a '72 Ford Galaxy 500. Two door, Chicale paint, gas hog with a bad ass sound system. It gets us to school and back and is our only way to a good time. On the way to Tony's sister's school we have to cruise down Gold Street, or as we know it, "Calle Oro."

"Are you going to pick me up?" his sister asked as she got out.

"Can't you walk home with Monica?" he said.

"No, she stepped on a needle yesterday."

"A needle?" Rick looked surprised.

"Yeah, you know, a..." she paused and thought a second, "those guys that shoot up."

"A tecato, Lisa?" Damn, I thought.

"Yeah those, but I can walk if you want." She looked scared, but Tony didn't see.

"Orale," he said as he put the car in drive.

"Wait," I said, "through Katana? Jesse's carnalita got raped There the other day. They never caught the vato."

"No shit, Tony, that's rape city," Rick added.

"Look," Tony said, hitting the steering wheel, "my old man took off again, my mom's working all day... Ah, fuck, I'll pick you up. Just be waiting for me." We took off.

We passed the liquor store across the street. This early in the morning winos were already out with their brown bags. The

mojados were waiting to be picked up for work.

"Isn't that Salvador?" Rick asked, pointing to skinny vato hanging around the older kids at the bus stop.

"Damn, he looks bad." We had been friends years back. "What's he on?"

"Chiva." Tony looked through his rear-view mirror. "Rudy, you didn't know?"

"No, man." I thought of last year, Mr. athletic and now he's selling shit to kids.

We passed Katana. My tia lives in that neighborhood. It's mainly old people and mothers without their men. Most of the kids don't know who their fathers were and the ones who do wish they didn't.

"Did you finish your math, Rudy?" Rick asked.

"We had homework?"

We came to the barrio of Gargano. "Frogger got shot in Gano last night," Tony said.

"So?" Rick didn't look up from his work.

"Excuse me, ese. I think he was a cousin."

"What the fuck was he doing there anyway?" Rick said. "Nobody goes in there at night."

"No shit, las pinches placas don't even come in here." Tony pulled over and got out.

"What're you doing?" Rick asked.

"Cops don't care about Gano." I leaned up to see where Tony was going.

"Watcha, check out the blood." Tony pointed at the stained concrete. "Bam! Right here, ese, blown away. Just like that. What an idiot. You know, they won't even deliver pizza in here."

Rick looked at his watch. "Let's go."

I was still trying to see the blood. It didn't look like much, but they were right. I know, that's where I was raised. There's one way into Gano, one street leads into others. Each with its own history, a drive-by here, a shooting there, break-ins everywhere. Like cancer, it started with one bad street, then spread.

Tony slapped in a tape and the car started to thump. The sounds drowned out all others, made us forget our real world. As we pulled into the high school parking lot, Tony threw a bag of "mota" on Rick's lap. "What do you think?"

Rick opened the bag, put it to his nose and took a deep breath.

"Good shit. What is it?"

"Hell, I don't know," Tony said. "I got it from Carlos. He was frying for days and finally crashed. He'll never miss it."

"You got papers?" I asked.

"We got school," Rick said, getting out.

"Chale, Rudy, wait for lunch." Tony put the bag under the seat. We headed for class.

Yeah, school really broke into our day. We spent most of our time figuring how to cut class. "Mr. Campbell, can I go to the restroom?" "Mr. Smith, I left my book in my locker." "Mrs. Roach, I'm bored, I'm leaving." We went to school to hang out with our camaradas. Passing periods and lunch was all we cared about. Oh, yeah, and the firme rucas, fine looking girls. Tony and I were sure to be chased by the security guards at least once a day. We'd slip into a class, any class. They

didn't care, but the teachers did.

Rick was different. He'd get in these moods. "School boy," we called him. Sometimes during lunch we couldn't find him until the bell rang. We got to wondering what he was up to. One day we followed him. He went to his locker, which shocked the hell out of us. Neither Tony or I knew where our lockers were. Rick got some books, and in chinga, he took off to the library. We followed.

"What are we going to do?" I asked, looking in the window.

"Let's go in."

"Don't we need a card or something?"

"Chale, Rudy. That's only to take out books."

As we walked in it seemed everyone and his mother was looking at us. Strange, two years in this school, and I'd never been in there. We passed the counter carefully.

"Watcha," Tony said, "there he is."

"Rica! W'as hap..."

"Shhh!" the lady behind the counter gave us these evil eyes. "Quiet, gentlemen. Please."

"Oh, sorry."

Rick looked up, then rolled his eyes and put his head down. We sat next to him.

"W'as happening, homes?" I asked.

"So this is the library." Tony pulled out his knife and started to carve on the table.

"Rick, what're you doing?" I asked, looking through his pile of books.

"Rudy, I have books. I'm in the library, and I was about to take out a pencil. What's it look like I'm doing?"

"Shhh!" The lady was checking us out again.

"Calmate Rica, we're waiting for you," Tony said. "The mota, remember? You want to come or stay your sissy-ass here and study?"

"Forget you, Tony. I have a test Friday."

"But it's only Tuesday, and..."

"Vamonos, Rudy." Tony started for the door. "School boy has better things to do."

"You sure this can't wait?" I asked

"Until when, Rudy? Nobody'll do this for me. I have to take care of my own shit."

When Rick had work we could never talk him into going with us. I guess that's what kept him out of real trouble. Tony and I, on the other hand, were always ditching cops or security guards.

That day we headed to the baseball field, our usual place. We could see anyone coming for a long way. We smoked a few joints and started to feel crazy. Walking back was a journey, rambling on about things that made no sense. We saw Rick going to his locker and caught up with him.

"How was it?" Rick said.

"Okay." I looked down the row of lockers trying to clear my head. "Hey Rick, you know where mine is?"

"Your locker?" Rick looked surprised.

"Yeah, how can I find it?"

"Ah shit," Tony said. He turned away and leaned on the wall. Then he pulled out his knife and began scratching the lockers. The bell rang. Rick started for his class. "What's the matter school boy, don't want to be tardy?"

Rick ignored him.

"It doesn't help, Ricardo, all this fuckin' studying." Tony followed him. "I don't know why you do it. We're all going to be busting our asses like our jefitos. Look at your dad, a palmero. A fuckin' date-picker."

Rick turned and walked up to Tony. "That's exactly why. I'm not going to be busting my ass." Rick dropped his books and put his hands in Tony's face. Tony flinched. "No cuts on these hands, ese! I'm going to be someone."

"Yeah right, a poor Mexican." Tony started walking away.

"There's money for us, Tony, for school, but we have to be smart enough to get it. At least I'm trying."

"Money for us?" Tony said. "Wake your ass up, Rick. It's a dream."

"No, it's you who should wake up." Rick picked his books up.

"Your raza's not good enough for you, ese?"

"Raza? Oh, 'cause I'm Chicano I have to be poor. Fuck that." He walked into his class.

Tony and I took our time. Didn't want to disappoint the security guard. I was so loaded, sixth and seventh periods were one big blur. A few times I caught myself cracking up at the writing on the blackboard. All I wanted was to go home.

Rudy, wake up, ese, we're home." Rick was slapping me on the forehead. I didn't even remember getting into the car. We got out.

"Aye, los watcho." Tony took off, headed for work.

I stood there a second, trying

to wake up.

"I hate this place," Rick said as we started across the street.

"What the hell are you talking about?" I rubbed my eyes, avoiding the broken beer bottles in the gutter.

"This place, all this, ese, I get loco when I think about it."

"What do you mean?"

"When I go with the jefito, we drop off the dates in these impaques. All the razas stacking crates, sweating in that big shed, and a vato with the Mercedes is in the little office upstairs with his A.C. on. He looks out once in awhile."

"So?"

"He went to college, Rudy. He signs the fuckin' checks!"

"You want to be like that, or what?"

"Better than that."

I looked at him. "Save-que, Rick, maybe you're right."

"Think about it, Rudy. Later."

That night we met on the corner of our apartments. Tony picked us up and we headed to the park. It's always packed with gente and rucas galore.

"Hey, check that out!" I said, looking at one fine girl walking with her boyfriend.

"Q-vo, she's bad," Rick said.

Tony yelled out the window. "You're looking fine, princess."

"Calmate," Rick said. "She's with her vato, homes."

"Yeah, a veterano," I added.

"Fuck him," Tony said slowing down.

"You got a problem, puto?" the vato yelled.

"Yeah, what you gonna do

about it?" Tony slammed the car in park and got out.

I followed him. "Hey, ese, we don't want a hassle."

"Why don't you go look at someone else's ruca," he said, coming closer, "before you all gel your asses kicked."

"Fuck you, chapeate," Tony said.

Rick gave me a here-we-go-again-look. Before I could step in, they started throwing blows. We stood back, but the girl didn't. This ruca knew how to throw. I tried to get her off of Tony's back and got scratched and punched. Tony was getting the worst of it. We managed to pull him away, but the other vato wasn't satisfied, being older with nothing to lose. More words were said, and they went at it again. Tony was losing bad. I had to jump in. I got some blows in, then one shot busted my eye wide open. I could feel the blood gushing out. The vato didn't let up.

Finally, the girl drew his attention from me to a car full of guys. He stopped. Then I noticed he was waving them down. I couldn't see very well. My head was throbbing and my eye was closed.

Rick yelled, "Let's go. Let's go."

I managed to pick Tony up, got him into the backseat, and I rode shotgun. Just as Rick got in, I heard a car stop. Five vatos got out. One came around to the driver's side, tagged Rick in the face, opened the door, pulled him out and started beating on him. I tried to get out, but the car door slammed closed on my shins. One vato held the door while the other went at me. They pulled Tony

out, threw him on the ground. He was getting a serious kicking. All I heard were grunts and bone-cracking blows. All I could do was close my eyes and try to cover my face. I was going to die. I was expecting a gun shot any second. But the punches kept coming. Finally, it stopped. As they were taking off, one vato came back, punched me again, then pulled out the cassette we'd been listening to.

"Watch your shit, punks," he said. "You better know who you're fucking with."

It was over. As I sat in the car I could hear Rick coughing and gagging on his blood. I couldn't feel my hands. I leaned forward trying to breathe, but it hurt too much. I began to choke. Then I leaned out and threw up. Tony was on the ground next to the car. I think he was lying in his own blood. I couldn't see very well. I sat back up and felt a tear run down my bloody cheek. I tried to shake it off, but then I just sat there and let the tears come.

I kept wondering, why do I get myself into these things? Tonight we were lucky, but what about next time? I had been here before. My brother went down hard and cold. I remember, though I try not to. Diego didn't belong to no gang either. But he went down anyway.

My Mom thought I was sleeping over at a friend's house when it happened, but I was there at the party getting drunk and high with my big brother. Me, an eleven year old. Everything

seemed like a dream that night. The mota was potent, the music and the rucas were firme.

My brother had been dancing with Margie, a long time girlfriend, but he always came to check on me. "Q-vo. How do you feel little brother?"

I looked up and tried to focus. "I feel... all right."

He walked away to get me munchies as he always did. I saw Margie run up and hug him. Orale, I want a ruca like that, I thought. They made a nice couple. I remember leaning back on the stucco wall, my butt cold, my hands in my jacket, and a beer between my legs. I tried to look up at the sky, but all I saw were palm trees and the eve of the house, its Christmas lights flashing, red... blue... green.... Little fireworks exploding just for me, on and off, without a sound. Not a single sound.

Then my silent little world shattered.

"Calle Fifty-two rifa!"

Vatos crashed the party. My brother and his homeboys started throwing chin-gasos. It was ugly. As I started to get up to help, someone said, "Hey chapete." I turned and... Wham! I was floored, just like that. One minute I was standing, the next, lying on the cold, wet grass looking up at this idiot.

"Soy Chango de Fifty-two, rancar."

I didn't want to challenge a veterano. Then someone jumped over me, and took Chango straight to the ground. It was Diego. He started going off on him. All I heard were his chingasos landing hard. I rolled to my side and tried to stand. Diego wasn't going to

stop. Finally, he saw Chango was unconscious. He got up and came to me.

"Are you hurt?"

"No, but he is," I said.

"Si-mon, he shouldn't fuck with my little brother." He helped me up. "Let's get you home, Rudy. I'll go get Margie. Wait in the car."

I got in the back seat and lay down. A few minutes passed. I heard voices and looked up. It was Diego and Margie. Another vato wearing a black poncho was walking up behind them. He didn't look familiar.

"Are you the brave one?" he said.

My brother turned around. "What?"

"Are you the brave one?"

"Brave enough, ese. You want to try me?"

"No, but this is for Chango."

"Who?"

The vato pulled a gun from under his poncho, aimed at my brother and fired.

P inches putos," Tony said as he got up.

I wiped the tears. My face was all swollen. I slowly pulled my legs into the car. It always comes back to me, that night. When I see a ruca hug her vato, or homeboys having a good time. But when I hear chingasos, or a gunshot, all I feel is an eleven-year-old boy curling up in the back seat in tears, calling for his brother. No matter how much I wanted him back, it would never be.

A car pulled up. I thought it might be a cop. but it was Tony's brother, Marcos.

"What happened, ass-hole?"

Marcos said getting out and walking over to Tony.

Tony leaned on his car. "We got jumped."

"By who?" Marcos looked over to Rick who was face down on the ground, wheezing.

"Some vatos in a red Monte Carlo with a primer top," I said. I looked in the mirror. I looked bad.

"What do you guys plan to do about it?" Marcos asked, going back to his car.

"Nothing," I said.

"Nothing?" Tony walked over to me. "They fuckin' jumped us, Rudy."

"You started the shit, homes," I said.

"That's right, and you will finish it." Marcos was walking back from his car with a bag. He pulled out two .38s.

I looked up at Tony. "Let it go. It's not worth it." Tony didn't say a word and put his head down.

"What's the matter," Marcos said with a grin that disappeared when he saw Tony's face, "your pussy friends aren't brave enough? Take the fuckin' gun, Tony. You're going with me. Nobody fucks with familia. Ain't that right, asshole?" Marcos grinned again slapping Tony in the head. "Let's go."

Tony started to the car, then turned. "Come with us, Rudy."

I looked at him. I couldn't say no. I sat there nodding, but I didn't get up.

"Let's go, Tony," Marcos said, starting his car. "We'll see who has the balls."

They drove off. As I got out I noticed my pants were ripped. Carefully I opened the tear. My

leg had a deep gouge from the door. "Ah, fuck." I was bleeding bad.

I made my way over to Rick. He was sitting on the curb holding his head.

"Are you alright?" I asked.

"No."

I slowly sat down next to him. "Will you at least live, then?"

"Have to, homes" He leaned over and spit blood. "Too much ahead of me not to." Rick looked at me. "What about you?"

"What about me?"

"Look at us, Rudy." He tried to stand, but ended up on one knee. There was pain and anger in his voice. "We're going to be like all the rest of the dumb, gang-banging Mexicans—dead. Look what happened to your carnal."

"Don't fuckin' bring that up, Ricardo!" Ignoring the pain, I stood and started to walk away. If there was anything anyone could've said to me then to open my eyes, that was it. It scared the hell out of me.

"We have a chance, Rudy,

something Diego never had. He'd want that for you."

I kept walking.

"Rudy, wait!"

"What."

"I can't get up."

I looked back and we both started laughing. It hurt, but it felt good. I went and helped him up, and with his arm around my shoulder we started home. We'd walked that path almost every day since we were kids, not giving it much thought. I knew I couldn't walk it much longer.

"College, huh?" I said.

"Yeah."

"What about me, do you think I'm smart enough?"

He laughed. "You really want me to answer that?"

I started to let go of him. "Do you really want to get home?"

He grabbed onto my jacket. All right, all right, you're smart enough."

"Really?"

"Yeah," he said. "We have to. It's the only way."

WHAT JESSE SAYS

Kim Kelsheimer

Jesse says I look like an angel, that's why he flies me around the yellow room downstairs. Jesse's fifteen, older than my brother, tall like daddy. When Jesse puts us to bed he saves me for last. He yells at Sara and scowls at Bob and pushes them off to their rooms. I get to sit on the edge of the couch and wait for Jesse. He looks back at me with a wrinkly nose and when I laugh his eyes get round like steelies, and he whispers, "shush giggly girl" with his finger to his mouth

I jump on the couch ready to fly at Jesse and he says, "come on angel, bend your knees. Let's catch some air." Jesse steps way back and I say, "Jesseee," but I bend my knees and fly. Jesse carries me down to my crib with airplane arms so I have to tie my fingers in knots behind his neck and press my knees into his sides. He brings his airplane arms in to tickle me. "You better hold on sissy."

He tosses me into my crib and makes goo-goo noises. "Shut up, Jesse, it's not a baby's crib." I can climb right over the top and jump

to the floor if I want to. It's not a baby's crib like my sister's. I hate her. She cries and mom feeds her with her boob. I told mom I was thirsty too, could I have some too, but she just told Sara to get me a glass of milk. I can get my own milk.

Jesse reaches in through the bars and pets my hair.

"When's my mom coming home, Jesse?"

"I'm not sure, Sis," he tells me and rubs my tummy. "I thought you didn't want your sister to come home."

"I didn't ask you when the baby was coming. I think mom will leave her at Aunt Karen's. Aunt Karen doesn't have any kids."

Jesse's tickling my privates. I stay quiet and close my eyes so he won't stop.

When daddy's at his day job, my brother's supposed to look after me, but Jesse comes on most days to take me to the trees. He brings Todd so Todd can see my privates too. Then I get to be the kitten. Jesse takes his shirt off and wraps it around my knee so my knee won't get ripped up. He makes Todd wrap his shirt around my other knee. Jesse

laughs at my meowing, "sounds like someone stepped on your tail Sis." He scratches behind my ears and I purr at him.

I don't like Todd. His fingers are cold like he's pressing river stones into my privates. Not like Jesse's chocolate hands, brown and melty and warm.

I'm scooching on my back away from Todd. Jesse put his shirt under me on the ground but I tell him the sticks are still poking me.

"Hold on Sis." He pulls me up onto his knee, my bare bottom against his jeans. He scrapes at the sticks and leaves, leaving the ground muddy.

"There sweety." He lays me down.

"Jesse?"

"It's okay Sissy."

Todd's taking his pants off. I've touched it before but my tummy feels funny. Jesse's eyes are shiny. His mouth is stretched into a line.

"Jesse?"

"Sis, it's okay."

Jesse's black hair's against my face. All I can see is Jesse's black hair. We're sitting against the tree and Jesse's rocking and rocking. His shirt's wadded between my legs.

"Jesse my tummy hurts."

Jesse's eyes look like spiders, like the shiny black backs of spiders, with wet legs and webs dripping down.

"Sissy I'm sorry. I'm so sorry." His arms are squeezing my achy hot body.

Jesse carries me home and tells Bob and Sara I'm sick. He leaves his finger tangled in my hair until I fall asleep

Daddy's home 'cause up stairs the windows rattle. I can hear his feet above my head. It feels like my insides are sliding out sticky on the bed sheets and I want to call out, "Daddy I'm sick," but I don't.

It's morning and the sun from the slanty window is on my face. I stop squeezing my eyes shut cause it's morning and okay to be awake. The blood is red and red on my sheets so I pull them up and my panties and my nightgown and I wad them up and pat the cover so the mattress won't look naked.

At breakfast Daddy asks, "what's wrong Celia," and I don't tell him that I dug in the trash and buried my sheets. I don't tell him that my tummy hurts cause my mouth is too full of things I'm not supposed to say.

On the front steps after Daddy's gone to work I wait for Jesse. He comes most days to take me to the trees. My sister's face looks like a swollen balloon and she scowls at me.

"Jesse's not coming Celia. He told Dad last night he couldn't watch us anymore." She turns and walks back into the house.

I'm sitting on the front steps waiting for Jesse. He comes most days to take me to the trees.

Keith Allen Daniels

CHAULMOOGRA MANTRA

"A man, though naked, may be in rags."

—Ambrose Bierce

We smile through the cerements of flesh,
and laugh—though mirth can make the belly heave
and calve the glaciers of a gnarly brow.
Though naked, we're in rags: it matters not.

Anointing with a liniment of fresh
chaulmoogra, the nurses can't believe
that humor lives in wrecks, and wonder how
the spirit, sorely tested, shatters not.

We're in stitches, but the tissues never mesh,
chaulmoogra cannot cure what eyes perceive:
we're monsters happy in the here and now.
Though naked, we're in rags: it matters not.

A change must come before the soul can flourish.
Chaulmoogra's for the shallow, let them grieve
for autumn leaves that wither from the bough.
We're in rags, but we're not the tattered lot.

. . .

Chaulmoogra: any of several trees of tropical Asia, especially *Taraktogenos kurzii* and those of the genus *Hydnocarpus*, having seeds that yield an oil used in treating leprosy.

—*American Heritage Dictionary*

Trevor Dodge
BABE

talk to me through my dreams, grandma.
knit and purl a reality i can live in,
one found in Mary Maxim catalogs so
i can tear up my Searscharge and be free
to soak in pools fed by hot springs,
concrete floors skinning our feet
while we laugh and forget the magnesium
of unfiltered cigarettes and
sock-me coffee of AA meetings.

i have seen the future in a cartoon graveyard,
an urn held to the sun transparent as gold. i hear
your television blaring from across the street,
grandma. turn it down turn it down turn it down.
my mother won a Bollingen prize today
a laser-printed certificate hangs on her wall,
her soul overcast.
she's not coming back.

the dogs are howling, grandma. they've learned
to speak in tongues red and swollen,
thick like goat milk. tell them to turn off the television
or change the channel. you know
how i hated Andy Griffith.

i'm planning a wedding march in your honor,
mimicked after the way you strolled me to kindergarten
arms light as dust. on the next snow day i'll
sit on your wrought iron railing
and wait for September to claim me as one of its own.

Lisa Whitehouse
VESPERS

Two children sleeping way upstairs
silent again in the late night.
I went up too, just moments ago
to kiss and pet their soft heads
to tell them I love and
am sorry for all
my failed promises bravely given,
my deeply inward visions
that leave them clawing
at the edges of my time.
Two children who in
front face full view
of a sometimes only good enough mother,
sleep and know without knowing
they will always have
smooth sheets to rest in
be locked in a safe house
awake never alone finding need,
ask for anything always
no matter how often
my patience turns vaporous
still, they will ask.
They believe and dream
with the angels
those who are loved completely.

**Timothy Blair Killen
AND SUGAR**

(she drinks a tea
with tinted scent
and sugar)

Her water paints, on canvas, delicious subsistence
and whispers of the bay
(of its gray),
ships weltering on salted swells;
girls making castles
of what the swollen stomach of sea gives.

She makes you want to lick the shore,
and stare,
and exist,
subsist.

But at three A.M.,
when the boys are tucked away,
she climbs down from her mountain
(it crunches underfoot,
is wintered
and breathed in),
sneaks past sleeping streets,
peeps around the signs of coffee shops,
and hides.

She sees the ocean there,
then turns.

W. Gregory Stewart
AN APPROPRIATE BEGGAR

He is becoming—
but this waits.
He is nearly convinced
of self-evident magic,
like love,
or internal combustion—
but these will wait as well.

Begin with this:
He did the best he could.
He did day-to-day with competence
but without conviction
and without faith
that tomorrow could be
the real result
of any day-to-day.

He watched the events of his current histories,
blind of him, take the world
(and him, along for the ride)
to the edge and back again,
and to the edge and back,
and forth, wondering
if there were
something he could
or something he should...

This is what he did—he did
9-to-5 for thirty years, punching
80-column cards at first,
and later on a keyboard,
to manipulate data he had not gathered
into arrangements he would not read.
He balanced the bits for No-man
with cyclopean single-mindedness—
he never missed a day.

No—*this* is what he does (will do,
has done for 30 years)—
he attaches things to things,
as things come down the line.

Before these things have come to him,
others have attached smaller things
to other smaller things (for 30 years);
further on, still others will attach
now larger things to other larger things.

All of this achieves
some largest thing,
and it's a union job; at night
they all drink beer, and some
of the wives and husbands
drink beer, too.

No, wait—this:
For 30 years, he reads
what others have written to others
who neither write nor read.

Now he is becoming the appropriate beggar,
nearly convinced of magic he cannot work.

And *now* he thinks—where did it,
when did it, why did it? What?
and loses it again.

His has become a life
of delicately confused
memory and might-have-been.

(Or could-be-yet, he will think sometimes
after beer and before bed,
but by morning he has always
lost the thought.)

He will/has never have/had the courage
to become ridiculous,
and chooses gray instead.

(*cont. next page*)

He *knows* this—he is waiting,
as much to find out what for as for
the thing itself.

He *thinks* this—that every minute
he waits is a minute in which
he has done nothing, and a minute
closer to ignorant death;
and he has pondered this for years.

Sometimes he goes to church—sometimes
he goes to the library.

He has not fallen in love this year,
and he wonders idly if he should
regret the failing flesh,
but decides, instead,
to grow a beard.

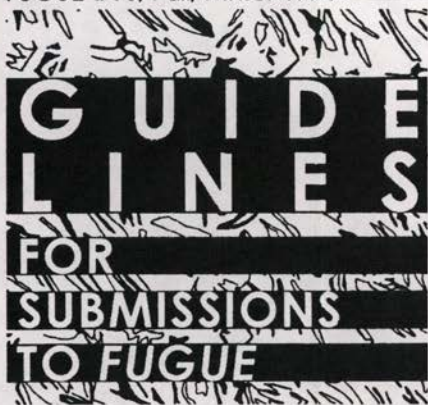
He has always wanted to build something—he wants
to build a boat; he's built
a box.

End with this:
He did the best he could,
as long as he could
without conviction;
and when whatever faith he had
failed altogether,
he became finally
an appropriate beggar.

**David Lunde
TO MARILYN,
AFTER SIX YEARS**

After six years
I still ogle your figure,
catch myself leering
through the smokehaze of time
like a too-lonely man
in a too-familiar bar
hoping to get lucky,
and I remember
astonished all over again
that I did,

I did.



GUIDELINES
FOR
SUBMISSIONS
TO FUGUE

☐ *FUGUE* is a biannual, multi-genre magazine containing fiction, poetry, and creative non-fiction chosen for a wide variety of reader tastes. The magazine is staffed by English majors and funded by the UI English Dept. A limited number of hardcopies are produced each issue for contributors and free distribution on campus. A single copy by mail is \$3.00 US funds. *FUGUE for Windows*™ is always \$4.00/copy and Site-licensing for networks is available at reasonable rates.

☐ **Submissions:** professional ms. format and a stamped, self-addressed #10 envelope for a response are required, or submission will not be considered. No simultaneous, reprint, or disk submissions. Send a ms. copy, not the original, to:

FUGUE c/o UI English Dept.

Brink Hall, Room 200

Moscow, ID 83844-1102, USA.

Submissions are review by three staff members and chosen on consensus, with final approval by the exec. ed. and/or staff advisor. The current exec. ed. for '94/'95 is J.C. Hendee. The current staff advisor is Lance Olsen. *Fugue* considers all types of fiction, poetry, and

creative non-f., within limits...

"There are two primary caveats for submissions to *Fugue*: One, the work must communicate effectively to the reader; Two, it must entertain the reader. By *entertain*, I mean to eliciting an emotional and/or intellectual response which makes the reader freely want to read on. All other considerations and agendas are secondary." —J.C. Hendee

Accepted material is published within nine months. No major changes are made to a manuscript without author approval.

☐ **Fiction:** complete—no excerpts, episodes, or serializations. 6k words max. Pay \$5 to \$20.

☐ **Creative Nonfiction:** as for fiction.

☐ **Poems:** All forms/themes. Pays \$3 to \$10.

☐ **Deadline:** All submissions must be postmarked by April 5th to be considered for the next issue, #11, Spr./Summer '95. Late submissions will be returned unread. Reading commences in early Jan. '95. Reading for #12, Fall/Winter '95, commences in late Sept. '95. *FUGUE* does not read during the Summer months.

☐ **Staff Submissions:** Staff members of *FUGUE* may submit to the magazine for consideration. Such submissions are read "blind" by other staff members, then further scrutinized by the exec. editor and staff advisor. No privileged consideration is given to any submission by a staff member of *Fugue*.

If you have further questions, query the exec. ed. with a #10 SASE for a response. All queries will be answered as quickly as possible.

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