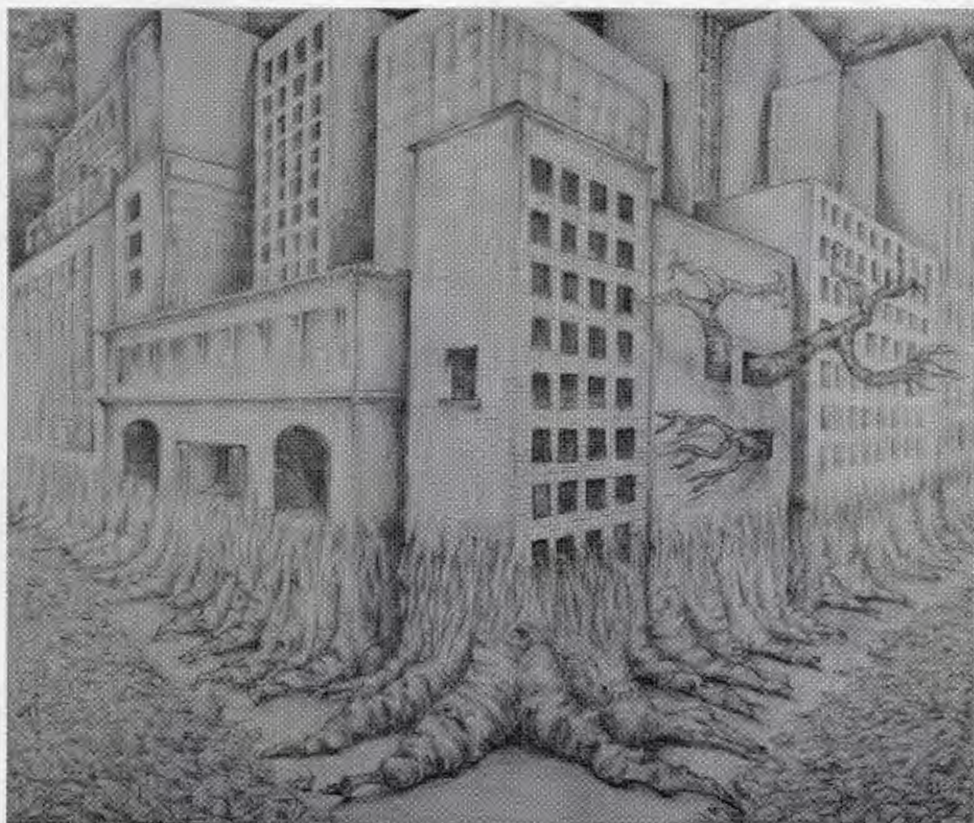


Cabbages and Kings

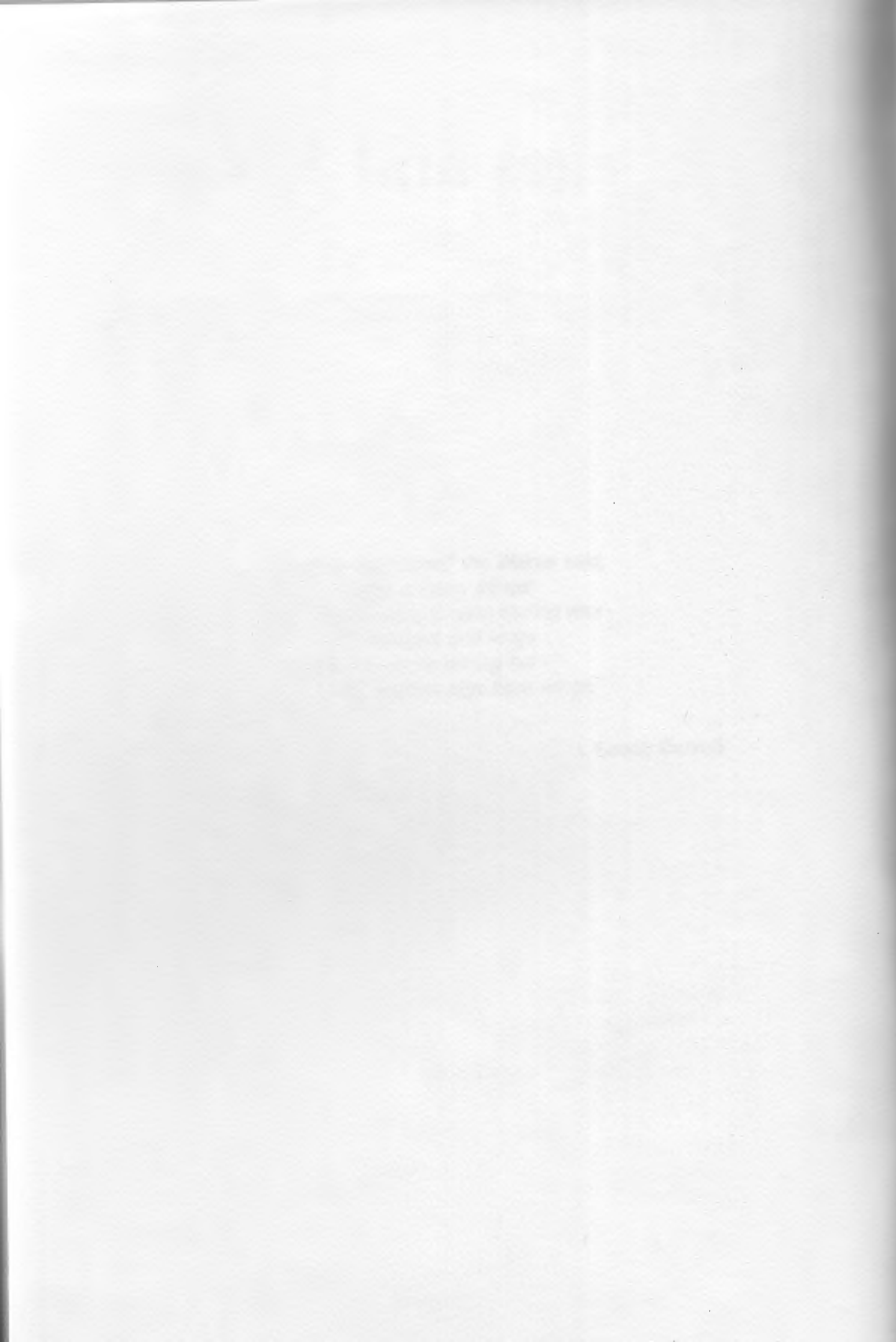


COSMOS

A grain of sand explodes:
effortless as thought
a universe forms.

*"The time has come," the Walrus said,
"To talk of many things:
Of shoes - and ships - and sealing wax -
Of cabbages and kings -
And why the sea is boiling hot -
And whether pigs have wings."*

Lewis Carroll



Monroe Community College

State University of New York

Cabbages and Kings

STUDENT LITERARY - ART MAGAZINE

**Fall 1989
Spring 1990**

Rochester

EDITORIAL MESSAGE

The walrus said it's time to talk, but enough already. It's time to commit. Too much time has passed trying to remedy situations, and meanwhile far too many new issues have emerged. We must choose our path, embrace and marry it.

Talk is never accurate.

"The job mostly consists of running meetings," said the advisor, "whoever wants to be editor this year can make a statement to the group and then you vote."

I flatly said, "I've taken more English courses at MCC than I count on both hands." But I counted, there were eight.

As for the job, it is much more than running meetings.

Call collect to the Muses, someone answers. Stretch your arms outward, someone grasps your hand. We are rebels with too many causes, choose and act, write about them.

This is what makes Cabbages and Kings.

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IN GRATITUDE

Our thanks are many, but to mention a few: **Judy Hall** and **Jim Hancock** for their encouragement and advice throughout the year; **Evelyn Stewart** and the staff at Student Activities; **Sue O'Brien** for letting us have meetings in the doorway; the entire **English and Art Departments** for their kind support; and our Advisor, **Harriet Suskind** for her insight and guidance.

We acknowledge the following for various forms of support: Jacquie at **A&R Color Labs** for their professional help; **WMCC and the Monroe Doctrine** for promoting our various events; members of the **Ski Club** and **TAAS** for sharing an office with us; and **Kay O'Connell** of Student Publicity.

Special thanks to the **MCC Print Shop staff** who truly makes this publication possible.

Cabbages and Kings

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Cabbages and Kings is created and published by the students of Monroe Community College. All works are original, therefore, authors reserve all rights.

* Winner of 1990 Cabbages and Kings Art Contest.

Guess Who

He's not the type to leave notes
or send flowers.
Sitting there breathing his music
in his humble, American bachelor pad.
With his vagrant companions (handsome boys).
He surrounds himself with China dolls,
and listens intently to the trouble of each.
A gypsy, locked inside walls that ache for memories,
yet can remember no passion here.

He could be called a simple man,
when you could call him a man at all.
So many times his innocence
clashes with his wisdom . . .
His strength
contradicts his youth . . .
But I have seen the moments
when that struggle gives way
to the most harmonious magic.

He is a poet in the quiet hours of his life,
(or perhaps I just fancy him one),
when solitude finds a wedge
in his 7-4, 6-10 schedule.

He is a Saturday night musician,
and a Sunday morning philosopher.

He seems unable to bear commitments.
Perhaps because it was not out of a commitment
that he was born.

He speaks to me when shadows are crimson,
and snowflakes of light fall sparingly on my carpet.
And he is but a green glow in my living room
. . . from the telephone. . .
half his universe/half mine.

We converse like poorly punctuated prose
with a deeper meaning to be conveyed
than the common reader might perceive.

by Carole J. Dash

Winner of 1990 Cabbages and Kings Poetry Contest



"Tangled"

Photograph by J. Young

Winner of 1990 Cabbages & Kings Photo Contest

In the Shadows

In the shadows
invisible light
patiently awaits
color of midnight

Flame in the blue sky
shooting fingers earthbound
life to Nippon. Hail

Touching a child's hair
the innocence reveals
will flowers bloom? Fate.

Green bamboo shoots, still
amidst the wind you sway
Brown bamboo shoots still.

As snow gently falls
Hiroko's song can be heard
dancing moon light veil.

In a winter cove
the snow bird's tune
floats across the waves

Open window, hush
gazing on the bamboo grove
the waning moon speaks

KOMUSO

Smart Talk

by Chris Donner

"We almost finished? (click, whirr, click) ...I'd like to
get outa here b'fore eight'a'clock..."
(click, flash, whirr, click)

"...no idea...this makeup (click, flash) is getting real
hot b'neath these lights!"
(click, click, whirr, click)

"This whole business really takes all I'got. Gotta try
relaxin' more..."

"Try fishing...(click, whirr, whirr) seems ta help a lot...
(flash) Dammit! that one caught me right n'the'eyes!"
(click, click)

"Look down quick - it'll help yer eyes (click, flash, flash,)
I always do...'spesh'ly if I feel dizzy."
(click, click, whirr, whirr)

"Ya' that helps...thanks..."

"Uh-oh...(click)...sneeze!...(click) ah-(click)...ah-
(click, flash)...ah-choo (click, click, whirr)...great, som'thin'
else ta laffit me about!"

"Hey, hey (click, flash) bet that one'll make it to the
books."

(click, flash, whirr)

"Shit (click) I creased this pancake stuff...ken ya tell?"

"t's OK, still looks good (click) they say when I wear
thi's stuff (whirr, flash) I look younger'n my wife."

"Yeah-does wonders...I look 100% (click, whirr) better
when 'ts'dun right. (click) Aerobics help too..."
(click, click, flash,)

"Yeah, yur behind is looking (flash) firmer!"

"Yeah, so yer Burt Reynold's toupee's lookin' good too...
(click, click)...cut's down that ol' lens glare. Hee, heh...
(flash, click, click)

"Wait'll that happens ta you, nothin's worse (click) than
that session wit' Mickey (click, whirr) ha, heh (flash)...shit!
right 'n'th'eyes again..."

"Look down! Look down!"
(click, flash, flash)

"Ya know 'f' I close one eye (click) there's this purple halo
shimmerin' all around yer head..."
(click)

"What?"

"Yeah, now it's turnin' green'n'yellow. (click, whirr)
(click, flash, flash)

"...oh-the flash...Hey look! here comes Matin - (click,
whirr, whirr, click, flash) - c'mon ol' boy, let's get outa here!"
(click, click, click, whirr, flash)

"OK! OK! (click) Ladies and (flash) gentlemen that'll be
all for (click) today. Mr. President, (click, flash) Mr. Vice
President, thank (click) you very much. This (flash, whirr)
photo session is now officially over (click)."

prancing thru the
asparagus, frolicing
thru the fruitcake,
we go hand in
hand, thru the
rainbow soaked
meatloaf, Deeply
IN Gravy and
Cheese.

Rick
Nickel

Grandpa's Space

by Emily Gasoi

The apartment is set like the scene for a play. It is a modern, but cozy space, decorated mostly in sunny-warm orange with some earth tones. The kitchen table, set slightly apart from the rest of the kitchen, is cluttered with the half filled serving dishes and the empty but well greased plates of a much enjoyed meal. It faces out onto an inviting living room with a couple of Lazy-Boy chairs and a long, flower printed sofa. The stark December light, which had been a cylinder streaming in the window behind the table, begins to fade slowly away. Dusk creeps silently in. It rolls along the wax table cloth, licking the plates and serving spoons as it goes. It brushes up against the walls and washes the floor clean with one, unbroken shadow. Then dusk embraces grandpa, who is sitting there at the table. It kisses his shaking hands and gently caresses the age from his passively smiling face. Grandpa feels pleased with this evening, with his life. He savors the taste left in his mouth by the meal.

"I'm so excited. . . this food makes me so excited," he says in an impetuous whisper.

"I'm happy you enjoyed it so much, daddy," answers his daughter, who is sitting beside him.

Grandpa remembers saying good-bye to his daughter just before dinner, but the woman sitting next to him looks very much like her, only older. Grandpa feels extremely drawn to her for this reason. He judges her to be about the same age as himself, give or take a year or two.

"Ya know, you're a very attractive woman," says grandpa, "I have a daughter, she looks just like you."

"I am your daughter daddy."

"Hey, don't give me dis crap," grandpa protests. " Sylvia just left."

"That was Emily, daddy, she's my daughter, your granddaughter."

Grandpa nods in agreement, though these names have slipped from his comprehension into some remote region in the vast landscape of his mind. He is young, and unmarried, and intoxicated with the very presence of the stunning woman who sits in the shadows beside him.

"Are you married?" He asks her.

"I'm separated."

"Me too," grandpa responds matter of factly. "Well ya know, I work wid sheet metal. I have my own place over der in Hillsdale. It's somethin', what ya can make wid your hands." He sits studying his strong, calloused palms.

"What kinds of things did you make," asks the woman.

"Oh just about anything," he laughs, "Ya know, sometimes I'll be workin' on somethin', and den dere'll be a problem. And I'll work on it, and work on it for days, and I just can't figure it out. And I'll say, oh fuck dis, and go to bed. Den in da middle of da night, all of da sudden, it comes ta me!"

"That must be wonderful, to work with your hands like that."

"Yes, it is. But my eyes ain't always so good," grandpa performs a sort of mime with his hands as he explains. They project an elongated image on the darkened image on the kitchen wall, and his shadow-hands move like slow, agile parts from a well tuned machine.

"I went to da doctor, and he gives me six pairs of dem der eye glasses, but dey didn't do nothin'. So den I made myself dese glasses. I had ta figure dem out just right, and I put dis piece in der, and den I put dem dere, underneath my eyes, but inside."

"Can I see them?" Asks the woman, stunned.

"Yea—well I don't know, I think dey'r lost somewhere. Der's so much crap in dis house."

"You should have been an engineer. You're so creative, and you've always had an amazing sense of space."

"Ya know, seems to me you're a very intelligent woman," Grandpa puts his hand on hers.

"Thank you."

He squeezes her fingers, "stay the night?" He asks.

"I'm Sylvia, daddy! OK, that's enough, how about shining some light on this scene," she pulls her hand away and stands up to switch on the stained glass lamp which looms above them. Grandpa gets up too, and they walk together into the living room where they sit side by side on the floral couch.

"See all dat crap dere," grandpa points to three small shelves climbing the wall behind a grand, oak framed television set. The dusty figurines which adorn the shelves have been carefully placed in various scenes. A little blonde braided girl dressed in an apron and pointy wooden clogs, sits milking a fat, spotted cow. A stiff limbed couple stand face to plastic face, waiting for the first few bars of a spicy flamenco to cue them to begin their steamy dance. An elegant matador with a dull red cape beckons to an imaginary beast. They all look ancient compared to the shining wood of the television.

"Dem things are from all over de world. Dem over dere too," he gestures with his chin to a black wood cabinet directly across the room from the figures posed forever in frozen action. The glass doors reveal the same type of knick-knacks: tacky trinkets made tasteful by the meticulous care taken in their arrangement.

"Yea, I know. You bought those with Margot. She's the one who put them there like that—Do you remember Margot, daddy, she's my mother."

"Oh yea," a bubble of endearing laughter pops delicately at his lips. "Margot, sure I remember her; she didn't want me to work dis much."

"Why not?"

"Well, because den she never saw me, 'ack Adolph,' she'd tell me, 'hab dock nichts fon dur. Must du immer arbeiten?' ya, ya, well she was a good woman too," he raises his brows and nods.

"Did you ever talk to her about your work?"

"Na. How could I talk to her—she was big and I was a kid. . ."

Neither of them speak; the buzz from the soft kitchen bulb takes the place of human sounds. It sings like an electric cicada, filling the space with a stillness, an audible silence all its own.

Grandpa closes his eyes and continues his journey back through the time he has stored away in his mind. He rides a rickety train through an icy landscape. He jumps off before his car has fully stopped, and walks for miles with his school sack strapped on his back

through white, silent snow. He comes presently to a small, but dignified home, the door of which he tugs open. There is a large, intense woman waiting for him in the archway inside. She is his mother.

“Gutten abend, mama,” he whispers aloud.

“Good-night daddy.”

Winner of the 1989 Frank Rice Award

Growing

by Kimberly J. Thygesen

As I sit here reminiscing, I vividly see a man who tried to capture my heart with impressive humor. He was a fragile, boney, medium height gentleman with dark hair (beginning to grey), blue eyes and he always seemed to smile. He wore black horned-rimmed glasses and he never talked about himself. If you asked a question he would give you an answer that was humorous or sarcastic.

I remember when we used to play golf together in the backyard during the autumn. The leaves were all turning luminous colors of bright orange, deep red, puke green, pale yellow, burnt auburn, and the wind was brisk enough to need a sweater. That autumn was special to me for he finally thought I was old enough to teach me his "secret" ways to play golf. At the same time he thought I was still young enough to be amused by his childish humor. I was too naive to realize either of these thoughts were significantly on his mind. He would let me beat him then act as if I'd really won just to see the satisfaction in my eyes. I had his respect and his friendship.

A year passed, but we didn't go out to play golf maybe only one or twice. We played in the house using a destination cup and putting the golf ball into the cup. He said it was too cold for him to go out. He had been sick a lot that year. I never questioned his wisdom. I was never taught to question it.

I don't know what happened the year after that. We didn't play at all, not even in the house. The sad part is, neither one of us ever even asked the other to play. Maybe I was too old or too busy. Maybe he was getting too weak and out of breath.

We don't even communicate anymore except for friendly conversation; the weather, school, or other people. I don't know what happened. It could be my marriage, my child, or my divorce, but I feel that I've lost the respect he once had for me. I see him sitting in his chair dying. I don't want him to die. I feel the way he felt that autumn when he didn't want me to grow up. However, there is nothing to stop the passage of time. I have also lost the admiration that I once had. I see him every once and a while trying to capture my daughters heart with his impressive humor. I respect him for that, but I only hope he doesn't lose touch with her as he did with me.

There is one thing I'd like to say to him: "Grandpa, do you want to play golf, I'd love too; I love you!"

Outpatient at Midnight

My head is unusually busy for this
Time of night. It is hot and wet
And not even sealed as a nurse
Wheels me past a Star Trek series of lights.

Now I'm in the presence of doctors
Who treat me to pictures and narcotics,
Jokes and haircuts.
The bed is another amusement,
Levitating to hygienic ceilings.

White light. Heaven? I must be
Dead. I can't feel or speak a thing,
Name tag still in hand, a sign on the bed
Says I'm the property of E.B.
And two men assure that I'm going nowhere.
I'm cocky and agree with them.

They tell me I look good
Swollen and threaded like a baseball.
I'm given a turban and my coat,
A spotted blanket.

I'm wheeled to a waiting room past
Bleeding hands on deck and broken
Toes in the hole,
It's a rush to watch it filled.
Rushes are what night is made for
And others are carried from the sea.

by Scott Davies



"Poetry in Roses"
by Matthew Darby

No Scent of Roses

Black and white bars, as fresh
as newspaper print; aluminum
rose stems swirl atop the gates;
the petals fresh scent only to
be smelled from the outside.

Two hours imprisoned with you,
no scent of roses; only sweat,
not normal sweat, death sweat.
Your once firm band reaches out
with guilt; not for help. Don't
take my hand to pull me down.
You can't force me anymore.

Poor girl . . .

Your once scornful look is only
pitiful. Don't play my sympathy;
you're committed not me! Every
minute for me is an hour, for you
only a brief second. My time is
now too precious.

As I walk away, I hear the echo as
the gate slams shut; I smell the
roses. The newspaper is finally
burned to ashes. A tear drips
down my cheek.

The girl spreads the ashes in the
rose garden. Her finger is pricked
by a thorn. Blood drips down her palm.

The girl's bloody hand wipes away the
tear on my face.

by Kimberly J. Thygesen

Apt. G

Night-washed
murmurs
tempting
candle-flame tongues
to lap Dark's
earlobe,

rendering shadows
and

oddly warm
snowdrops

on lips.

Dreams
and

Sleepy-sweet
repetition:

filtered sunlight

dancing between

love-drunk bellies

by Nicole Bernard

Eucharist

Leaves
rested on the forest floor
like Demeter's footprints.
We walked, three-handed,
reminding ourselves
not to disturb
the contented solitude
of the trees.

Orange and yellow
spattered branches
sifting sunlight
to our heads
could have been
the Sistine Chapel ceiling
in a grander Church.

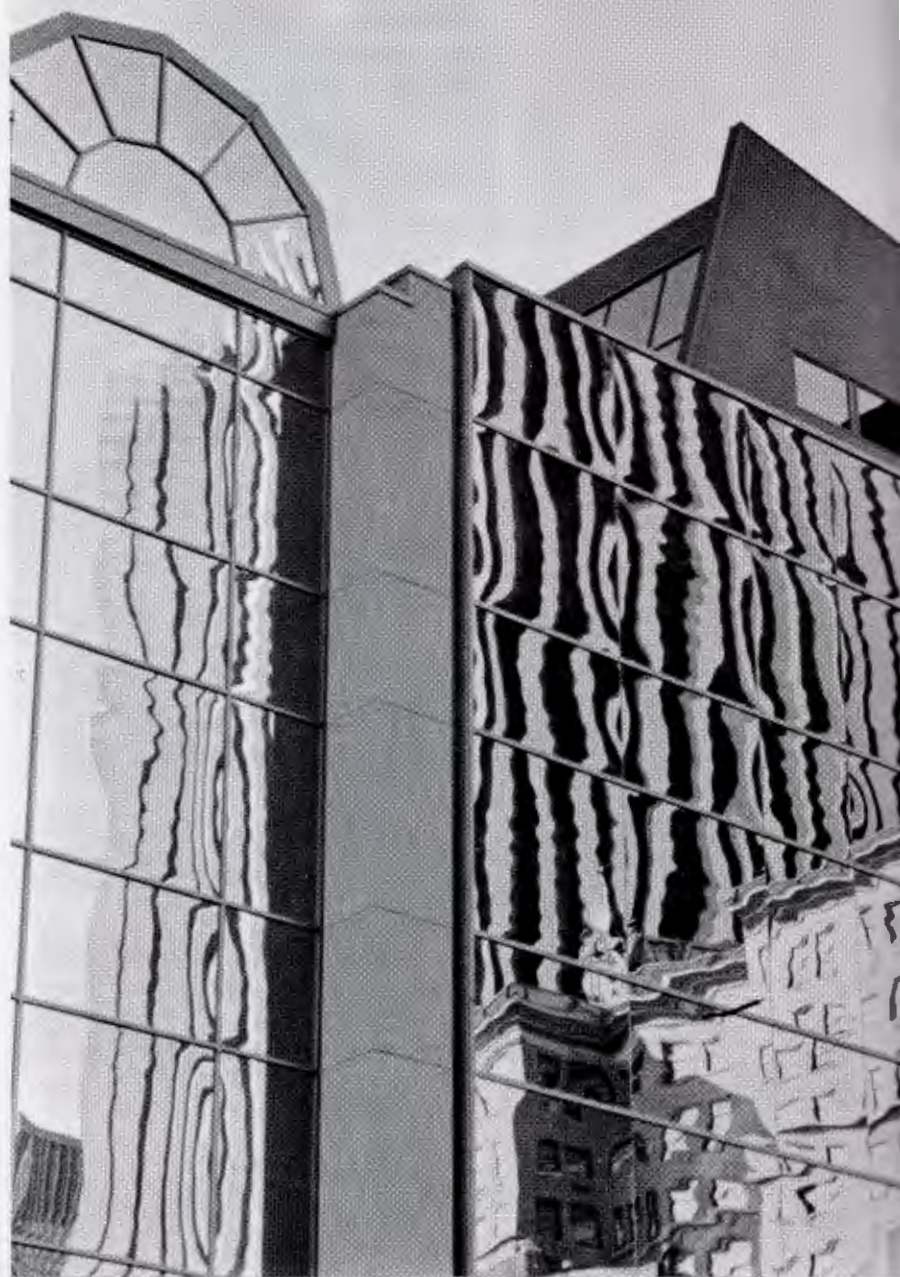
We stood facing
in a breathless wind.
He plucked a sassafras leaf
from a branch
and put it in my mouth.

I glanced backwards
to my Catholic childhood
and visions of a stern priest
placing a communion wafer
on my tongue.
Memories
flooded my soul
like the Body of Christ.

Funny, I smiled,
a communion wafer
never made me want
to make love
the way a sassafras leaf can.

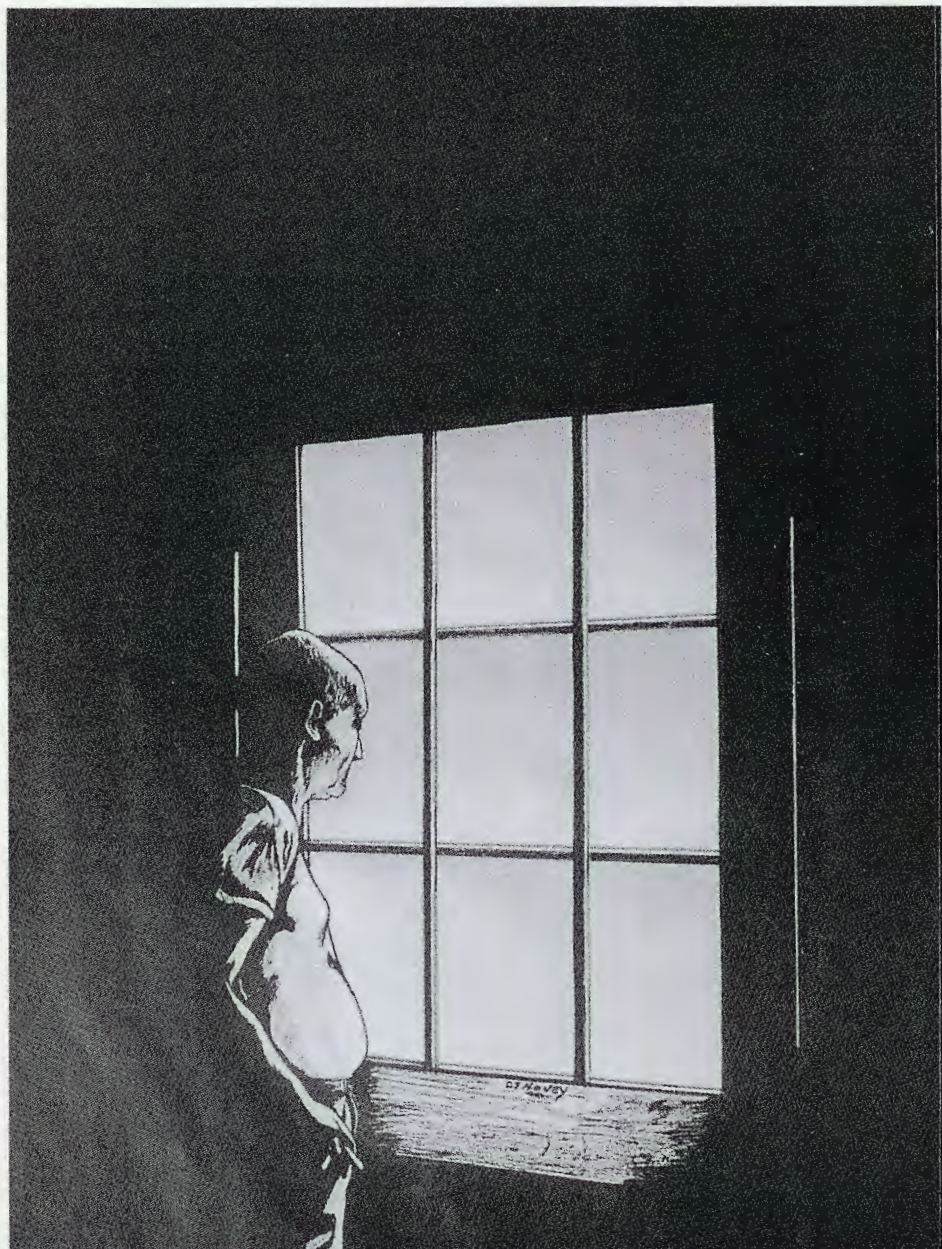
I leaned sideways
into
a tree trunk's
ten thousand commandments.

by Nicole Bernard



"Reflections"
Photograph by Thalia Doctor





"Solitaire"
by C.J. Hovey

*Color separations produced on a Scanitek 100,
Compliments of the A.B. Dick Itek Corp.*

A Pilgrimage to a Place in Time.

I wish I could close my eyes and be there.
These chilly fluorescent lights just blur the view.

The grass will survive until deep winter,
not having been left to wither in the August blaze.

The flowers still blooming, as all good flowers should.
Though they are no longer reminiscent of brightly clad toy soldiers,
marching in a row.
More like pale, random splotches on a dusty canvas.

The hedges still stand undisturbed and healthy,
though not as carefully manicured as in days gone by.

The ivy still clings to the Oak trees, though parched and with direction.
And the Oak trees, well, they do what they do. Oaks are strong.

They paint the gate and garage white. (Selling point, I suppose.)
Actually they painted more plants than porch. . .
(I wonder if that's the latest thing?)
I touched the wall, and wondered if you packed your whole dark room?
All the rooms seem dark within this shell today.

The green pick up no longer resides on the grass in the yard.
(Another selling point, I'm sure)
I see you drive it now and then,
but I always thought it looked better against green than black. . .

The top off an old hummingbird feeder still hangs from a tree on the patio.
A few of them may have come back looking. . .
Had they ever a voice, their songs have been silenced.

The front entrance is still as elusive as it was in those days
when the warmth of a large kitchen, bustling with hungry teenagers
drew welcome guests through the back door.

Kids still ramble down the street in go carts,
as if the neighborhood hasn't suffered for it's loss. . .

The sounds of Bach and Beethoven no longer linger
above the low roar of sibling rivalry.
There are few sounds louder than the leaves beneath my feet.
... Now, when it isn't even Autumn...

I wish I could close my eyes and be there.
This constant creaking is such a distraction.

If only these rusty nails and weathered wood
were part of that "For Sale" sign...

I feel sure I will be the last person
to be lulled into a gentle daze by these trees.
Soothed by the motion of this swing...

Once, when this place was my universe.
Drawn here by the hills in the distance.
Such a perfect resting place, on my journey to real love...
This swing was my safest refuge.
Back when you were the man of the hour...
My sweetest kiss, my strongest laughter, my first-born daydream,
balloons, surprises, whispers and hope...

WE went so fast.
And looking back, not so very far.

Somewhere in a magic bubble
floats the you & I that never even grew strong enough
to ride the winds of the outside world.
Each time you tired of our little fantasy, and tried to escape,
I lured you back.
Until the day you realized, that you would be going places
I could not follow.

It's all okay.
With tears, space, and experience, most things are eventually.
It's all been okay and said and done for quite sometime now.
We've both found others, and we've both found each other again,
and again walked away. In different ways, for different reasons...
We are friends, through some unexplainable connection that sparks occasionally,
if perhaps not on the basis of all we have in common...

by Carol J. Dash

Grace

by Marlene Pritchard

Melissa whispered to the still air, "Why can't I hear anything from the other room? Why won't she just wake up?"

She felt relieved to hear the coffee maker chatter and the bacon sizzle. Last night, she jumped with fear at any noise, but now these familiar sounds soothed. The sun cast a shadow of chimes made of seashells and fishstring onto the refrigerator door at the end of the narrow kitchen, causing the only motion. It reminded Melissa of the mobile that once hung over her younger brother's crib. When the coffee was ready, Melissa poured a cupful and sat in the giant rocking chair by the window. She waited for a sound from the bedroom, hoping that soon Mrs. Babcock would waken.

Sunday morning in this house was greatly different than those Melissa was used to at home. When Mrs. Babcock telephoned Saturday morning from the country asking Melissa to come spend the night, she could barely hear the old woman's voice over the noise of the sirens and car engines in the city.

"I haven't been feeling well, and I need your help."

Melissa didn't hesitate, "I've got some errands to run and I'll see you about four o'clock. Okay?"

"Thanks honey. See you then."

When Melissa arrived Saturday, about five o'clock, Mrs. Babcock sat napping in her favorite chair. She looked at the old woman's hands, spotted with age, wrapped tightly onto the arms of the chair.

Beside the chair stood the aluminum walker Mrs. Babcock had used for support the last few years, the telephone, a stack of papers, a glass of water, medicine bottles and the remote control for the television. She leaned towards the right of the chair with her head of pure white hair tucked into the corner.

Before dinner, Mrs. Babcock said Grace. "May the spirit you've grown with stay in your heart forever. I wish for you the songs of birds, blessed silence and God's sweet peace when day is done. Amen."

Melissa's parents moved into the house across the road from the Babcocks when she was four years old. Mrs. Babcock told the story of their introduction to Melissa that evening over dinner. "Your father brought you across the road, and with a yardstick you showed me that you stood exactly three feet from the ground. While your father and I talked, you wandered out the driveway and back across the road. A car missed hitting you by about two inches. While scolding you, your father said that you would never be allowed to cross the road without him."

The evening passed with exchanges of stories, a burst of laughter, and then another story. Sometimes Mrs. Babcock quizzed Melissa about information in the news, or stories from the Bible. Melissa sat on the floor like a child listening deliberately to each carefully chosen question. It was an odd relationship, yet natural and comfortable for both. Nothing interfered with the closeness these two friends shared.

After dinner, at Mrs. Babcock's instructions, Melissa prepared the bedroom by turning on four lights, getting a fresh glass of water, no ice, and turning on the electric blanket.

Slowly Mrs. Babcock shuffled along the wooden floors towards the bedroom, pointing out the place where she fell on the floor two weeks ago. When they reached the bedside, Melissa pulled back the covers and helped swing Mrs. Babcock's legs onto the bed. They placed a pillow under the hip that was covered with bruises from the fall. Melissa turned off three of the lights and moved for the door.

"Goodnight Mrs. Babcock."

"Goodnight. I love you."

"Are you sure the pillow's in the right spot?"

"I'll get comfortable, honey. Don't worry. Go get some reading done."

"If you need anything, just holler."

Melissa turned at the doorway to look at the woman sweet with love.

"Melissa are you afraid to stay out here in the country?"

She answered quickly, "No. I'm afraid you won't wake up in the morning. I don't know what I'd do without you. I'm scared."

Softly from the bed, Mrs. Babcock whispered, "I'll be up in the morning."

Leaving the bedroom, she turned off the last light and closed the door. Melissa spent the night restlessly lying on the couch listening to the cluster flies bounce of the ceiling. She was acutely aware of the stillness. Looking across the paved abyss to her parent's house, the house where she grew up, Melissa wondered if her father remembered the day he brought her across the road to meet Mrs. Babcock. Silence began to haunt Melissa. She imagined a man in a black robe pacing around the kitchen table. Helpless, she watched the man walk towards Mrs. Babcock's bedroom. The draft in the kitchen caused the chimes to ring and jolted Melissa awake. Lifting herself from the couch, she walked towards the bedroom door. A floorboard creaked and Melissa stopped, turned on the balls of her feet and quickly stepped back to the couch. Lying down, Melissa's eyes stared at the bedroom door until they closed.

When Melissa woke in the morning, she felt as if she'd never slept at all. The clock in the kitchen chimed once, it was seven-thirty. Melissa poured more coffee and paced around the kitchen, still waiting for Mrs. Babcock to waken. She thought about the image of the man in the black robe, a knot formed in her throat and she washed it down with coffee. When she heard sounds from the bedroom, a wave of relief flooded from her forehead. She remembered the words Mrs. Babcock softly whispered, "I'll wake up."

The two shared breakfast and Melissa read some of the morning newspaper to Mrs. Babcock. Feeling restless, Melissa decided to walk down to the pond. An old cow lane stretched behind the house through a fruitless apple orchard towards the pond. Melissa walked quickly to warm herself. She could almost feel the grass breaking with each step, the frost had been heavy the night before. When she rounded the corner and looked for the pond, she saw only a cloud of mist hanging low in the gully, completely blanketing the pond. Her pace slowed as she navigated a short cut down the hill. The pond came into sight, and beyond it stood the old cabin where she and Mrs. Babcock camped years ago. Like when she was a child, Melissa ran towards the cabin, by the pond and onto the porch, slapping the nearest corner as if she were racing someone. Two old metal chairs were still

on the porch where she remembered Mrs. and Mr. Babcock sat watching afternoons pass. One of the chairs tipped against a pole, as if being drained of rain water. Melissa straightened the chair and rested in it for awhile.

The pond was still, like the night before had been. But nothing about this stillness frightened Melissa, rather its natural beauty reminded her of the day Mrs. Babcock first taught Melissa to swim, when everyone was so full of life. But the soaring oak trees and evergreens, the birds and fresh deer tracks no longer captured Melissa's deepest interest.

She remembered Mrs. Babcock teaching her to rub pine needles between her hand to capture nature's perfume. The memory caused a chuckle that turned to tears. Crying for a time in the past heightened the sadness she felt for her aging friend.

When Melissa opened her eyes, looking through the mist she saw great clouds passing front of the sun. Without this warmth, the metal chairs seemed colder now and Melissa climbed back up the hill to the house.

"I'm back," she yelled, taking off her coat and boots. Mrs. Babcock had fallen asleep in her chair. Melissa knelt down before the old woman and held her hand, stroking it to waken her.

"Mrs. Babcock?" Melissa's heart pounded.

She raised her voice, "Wake up, I'm back. I found my way down to the pond.....Mrs. Babcock. Wake up."

The old woman didn't respond.

The other day my younger
brother asked me why are
African babies' bellies
so fat
on TV.

and I was about to tell him
how emptiness can be bigger
than any meal and that it
only looks like they're fat
from a hunger that he will
never know and why they didn't
cry when flies buzzed on
their faces but

I said:
they
are
starving

somehow he understood

by Micheal Ach

Raisin Lady

by Robin M. Fiano

What a night, I thought, could work get any more boring? Monday was known among Burger King employees as "Lethargic Night," but an hour without any customers was taking the title a bit too seriously. I think I even would have welcomed the infamous obnoxious customer.

I sighed, and leaned against the grease splattered counter. Absent-mindedly, I wiped up some salt.

"Hi, Honey."

Startled, I turned toward the voice. Catching my attention first was the array of objects spread out by the register. Pennies, nickels, bits of paper, and lint spilled from a small, beaded change purse. Sorting this collection was the most oddly dressed individual I'd ever encountered. Red wool hat, barely covering her stringy, ash-colored hair, tattered and faded coat over baggy jeans, and massive dull-gray boots to complete the ensemble.

"Coffee, please."

Dumbfounded, I poured a cup, and watched her stumble toward table. Clutching the styro-foam in one hand, and a knapsack in the other, she fell into a chair. Settling herself, she unzipped the navy green backpack, and produced a Wegmans bulk bag filled with raisins.

Pretending not to stare, I armed myself with some cleaning aides and set up post near her. I watched her performance in awe for the next hour and a half.

Never venturing into the knapsack again, she sat statue-still, and one by one plucked a raisin from the bag and placed it in her mouth. Every six or seven raisins I counted, she would sip from the styro-foam flavored coffee.

Emptying the bulk bag and cup at roughly the same time, she rose, and brought the bag to the trash can. Seating herself once again, she proceeded to rip off a small piece of the cup. Rising, she walked back to the garbage and threw it in. Returning to the table, she sat, tore off another piece, rose, strutted to the garbage, threw it away, and resumed position in her seat. I sensed a pattern. For however long it took to obliterate that little innocent cup, I stared in fascination, my work duties fading into non-existence. Rising, she plucked the knapsack off the chair.

"Goodnight, Honey."

I nodded, as she forced open the door. She trudged through the snow, off to some unknown place.

Aria

by Jason Brown

It was just dark, and the snow fell as the Rosens prepared for dinner. There were five of them: Mrs. Rosen, divorcee; Naomi, eldest daughter; the twins, Sarah and Simmi; and Adam, the youngest. Dishes clattered and siblings argued as Mrs. Rosen tried to get the warmed-over chicken and rice mush on the table in time for her to change clothes and get to her meeting. As she rushed about the kitchen, she was able to remain just aware enough to keep from tripping over any one of the their three grown cats, who were inside most of the time, now that it was winter. The kids elbowed and argued; sticky-fingered glasses of two-percent milk getting warm on the table. Beneath the arcane coiled fluorescent light above, it seemed that the milk got warm as soon as it was taken out of the refrigerator. Behind the crowded table was a white enameled bookcase, stacked with cookbooks untouched for ages with yellowed newspaper clippings sticking out from between the pages here and there. There was a special shelf reserved for Mrs. Rosen's lending library of self-help books; and beneath these were stacks of textbooks from forgotten night courses she'd take sporadically at Monroe Community College. On top of the shelf and on the windowsill were potted plants: ferns, ivy, and a wandering Jew; pale and yellow from the half attention paid to them.

"Cut it out!" Simmi shouted at her brother. At age twelve, the twins no longer shrieked, rather they honked. With their chubby bodies and course blond hair framing pouty faces and round glasses, their mouths were perpetually curved in frowns of displeasure, and their voices had changed like those of adolescent boys. Adam was poking at Simmi; standing next to her chair with his legs spread apart and his back arched; arms spread; jaw thrust forward; eyes bulging.

"Make me, ism, make me!" Ism was one of his words that was obviously derogatory, but nobody in the family was really sure what it meant. Adam rolled back his eyes and made a long gurgling noise in the back of his throat, ending in a distinct grunt, which he punctuated by poking his sister in the arm one more time.

"I'll make you, you little shit. . ." Simmi replied, and she swung her fist around, with the knuckle of her middle finger protruding, and delivered a devastating noogy to the top of Adam's skull. Adam howled and grabbed his head, and began to cry loudly.

"Stop it now, you two!" Mrs. Rosen shrieked. "For God's sake, can't we have a little peace around here when I come home from work? Simmi, you *know* hitting is forbidden!"

"It's his fault, mom, he was poking me."

"It was his fault, you know." Sarah chimed in.

Adam was still bawling, but Mrs. Rosen only gave him a sidelong glance.

Naomi looked up from her dinner and glared at Simmi. Suddenly, Adam screamed, and began whirling like a dervish. He veered into Simmi like a gyroscope and began pummeling her. Sarah jumped up and ran around the table to her sister's aid. Chairs scattered, and in a moment all three were on the floor, kicking and screaming. One stray leg knocked Adam's mealworm science project across the dirty linoleum. Naomi got up

and stalked out of the room, leaving her mother standing in the middle of the kitchen, shaking; clutching the roots of her long grayed hair with both clenched fists. She whirled, and stomped into the den, which was just off the kitchen. She picked a pile of sheet music and began singing an aria from *Madame Butterfly* in a shaky soprano. In the kitchen the three youngest still wrestled and yelled; the twins just now overpowering their hyperkinetic brother, who was screaming at the top of his lungs. Mrs. Rosen continued to sing, now staring straight ahead, with mascara streaked eyes and her hands clasped across her stomach.

A little later, Mrs. Rosen backed her Ford Fairmont station wagon into the street. The Rosens live in Brighton, just outside of the city limits. Their house was on a quiet tract not far from Cobb's Hill. It was a small two story tudor, which sat on a short hill, close to the street. In place of grass on their front yard was ivy and pachysandra. A one car garage stood closer to the street than the house. Up and down the street Christmas lights flashed. It seemed every house had them except the Rosens. The lights surrounded cozy looking living room windows where peace and quiet no doubt reigned supreme.

The children were left under Naomi's care; she was seventeen and able to exercise just enough authority to prevent Mrs. Rosen from returning home to a pile of ashes smoldering where here house had once been. At this point, that was consolation enough for her.

She wheeled out to Edgewood and turned into the Jewish Community Center parking lot. She shut off the car, unbuckled, and with a series of grunts hoisted her matronly body up; her Eskimo-style boots finding footing on the iced surface of the parking lot. She stopped to straighten her hair with her purse still in her right hand. The falling snowflakes seemed to bounce off her lips, shellacked with bright red lipstick, which contrasted sharply with the white powder covering her face. Her eyelids were smeared with indigo, and the lashes generously supplied with fresh mascara. She stood for a minute; sighed; then proceeded inside.

Mrs. Rosen was a well known figure at these meetings; she was a support-group maven. She went to as many meetings as she could and she knew others who did the same. She was part of a nomadic group of seekers, searching for that one special meeting; that one bit of information that would deliver them to the path of self-determination. Just when she thought she had found it, however, it was invariably obliterated by some new tumult on the homestead. Tonight's meeting was an eating disorder group, but she knew people there from A.A., Alanon, and Smokenders, as well as several dysfunctional family and assertiveness training groups. If there were no meetings scheduled, she would call up Joyce and Miriam, and the three would go to the Princess at Twelve Corners for decaffeinated coffee and guilty desserts. They came from different backgrounds, but all their problems seemed the same when they were together. It's not as though they didn't really care about each other, but they seemed to feed off of each other's problems. Still, when they were together, their respective troubles were related with smiles and dismissive waves of the hand. Mrs. Rosen never invited anyone over to her messy house. Tonight she told no one of scattered mealworms or obliterating arias.

The night's meeting proceeded as usual. Casual conversation prevailed, and nothing much of consequence was said or done. Since it was a weeknight, nobody went for coffee afterward; and they all headed home around 10:30. The snow still fell; and they brushed

off their cars in silence. Tonight's talking had been done.

She drove home slowly, too slowly. She was oblivious of the shaking fists and the curses of the drivers who passed her. She pulled into her street; past the blinking Christmas lights; and pulled into her little garage. She was slightly disappointed that she hadn't returned to the pile of smoldering ashes. The house was dark and quiet; the children's chorus had called it a night. She walked into the kitchen; past the dying plants and the sinkful of undone dishes; and proceeded into the den. She picked up the sheet music and started singing that aria at full volume, ignoring the blackened, oily liquid that dripped onto her reddened lower lip.

Sunday Run Along the Barge Canal

Early. I pass Oliver Loud's Inn
and note the pattern of the trees:
overhead, a great shrub is weaving
its scarlet berries across the tow hitches.
I raise my eyes to the third and final bridge.

All's clear.
For a moment I close my eyes
and listen as the pulse of the century
changes. *Once these banks were alive
with men making safe passage for boats.*
Now early morning greets retired fishermen
trolling, their rods lecturing the water.

Ahead, a new runner in red
sweats, his eyes dark and serious
beneath his cap. *I'm wearing shorts,
my sleeveless shirt clinging to my chest
like a badge. Macho*, he probably thinks
as I sprint past. I am studying leaves,
the forms they lay beneath my feet.

More twigs, more stones—one light struck
oak sprawls like a giant drunk in a field
with posing horses, all sleek and glossy.
They take no notice of me.
I have to reach the boat houses
at the end of the path, touch land
viridian and marshy at the inlet.
With last bridge behind me,
a stretch of wilderness remains.

On a solitary Sunday along the path
the world retreats—blurs—
a canal of Venice in morning haze,
or a special strand in Bretton—
or the Mediterranean when cypress
stretch out over the sea . . .

*And time to question if this
is mirage, a message from my lost voice
calling to shades beneath the ground?
Something I can't yet name
is keeping me moving,
testing the land before I head home.*

by Harriet Susskind

The Acquired Virtue

A turtle's walk
creates impatience
amongst the blind.

The rest
study the wind.

by Jennifer Wright

Individual drops

Individual drops
pound down.

The weight of
soaked clothes
and bones
imprint the mud
sucks
feet
long for concrete
but
walking the man-made path
how quickly souls ache and
flatten.

by Micheal Ach

transience

breathing,
I am a child.
Born to this world,
I have myself
to blame.

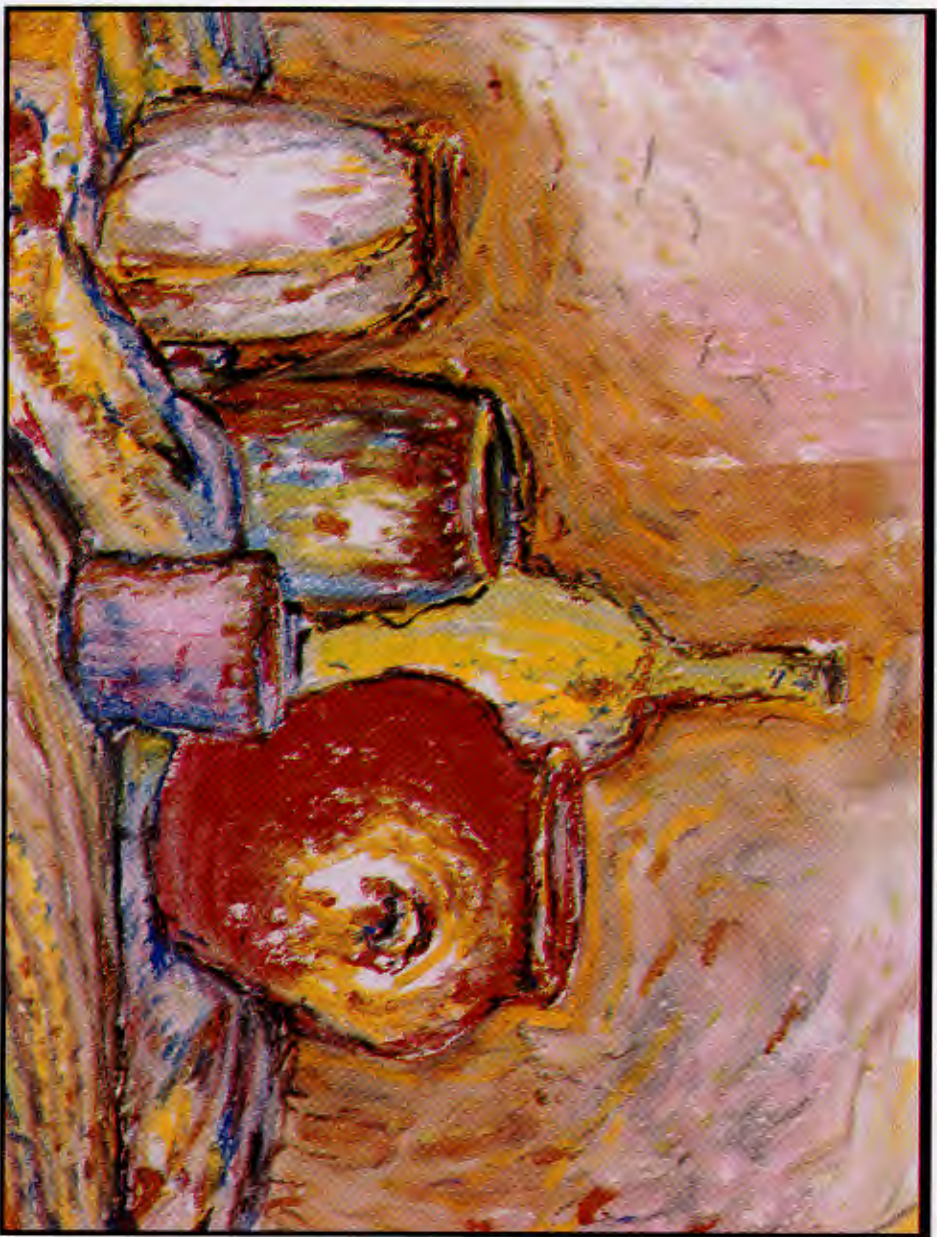
I possess a stone,
a feather,
and an acorn.
I may carve my initials
into the sand,
but I can not
own the land.
what.

Does it matter to the stars
whether I sing at night?

by Thomas M. Jones



Untitled Photograph by Jason Wargo



Untitled
Photograph by Rick Nickel

Color Separations produced on a Scanitek 100, Compliments of the A.B. Dick Ink Corp.

Silent Night

Shivering into a worn blanket,
in the abandoned building,
homeless, alone, outcast,
hair and beard matted and tangled,
home to a thousand parasites,
the stench of urine overpowering:
he sleeps fitfully.

Aroused, alerted by the giant of a rat's eyes,
its tail dragging as it disappears,
the Wild Irish Rose had lost its mysticism,
time to move,
to find a place offering existence—
a used cigarette, racking coughs,
intensify the flavor, the journey.

Head hung, feet shuffling across cement,
a stranger striding past offers a nod,
a gay "Merry Christmas."
Another holiday, festivity?
He grins,
teeth like broken tombstones.

by Francis Furch, Jr.

A dark skinned boy in a candy store
made me crave for a chocolate kiss.
He'd be sweet as hell, I could tell,
just a little nibble, was my secret
wish.

Lollipop boy, I want to lick your face
every day.
I know I shouldn't tease you.
I'd love to please you,
but you might melt away.

by Pat E. Laine

Life

Two small girls
Hand in Hand
Gazing at a coffin

Dark, shiny wood
Lined with sky blue satin
Surrounding a lifeless body

A child's toy lay inside
A note wrapped around it
"Get well soon, Mommy."

by Tina Sheradin

Specifically Nowhere

Walking under the sky I found myself
nowhere specific.
The skeleton of a wood
surrounded me;
definitely, I was alone. . .

I came upon a bridge,
indistinct in many ways,
which carried me over
a slow, thick stream.
I stopped to look- shallow,
the water flowed dark and sad and
had nothing to offer me.
I was in someone else's place,
so I traveled on. . .

My cheeks and nose and ears
I'm sure were bright and pink,
as they felt icy
as my hands and feet;
I suppose it was far colder
than most care to wander in
without cause, and were the sky
not grey and white
or nowhere not so appealing
I may have seen no cause
for walking myself.

I walked and was surprised
by the sound of a stranger's
footsteps who must have been
my own, stepping on the stiff
leaves autumn left behind.
Their crunching sounded painful
but not human enough for heartache.
The crunches reassured me
and I was still on my journey.

I walked into a thicker wood and a deeper hunger,
sure that nowhere listened
to my crunching
and waited for me.
I turned my direction
spontaneously
to climb a small hill;
the ground was soft
and welcoming.

I sat on the hill,
next to a towering but intimate
evergreen, listening
to it creak and sway
in the evening whispers.
There was snow sleeping
below my hill and fertile spread
of less powerful evergreens
over the necklace of the hill,
brothers of my own.

Nowhere they could be
for someone
but not me;
I found my nowhere
and I would be selfish with it.
My young body was numb
not cold
but almost drunk,
and I laughed honestly.

When I stopped I heard
the creak and the sway
and then the voice
of an engine exercising
along a road nearby.
I was sad
for a thought
and then it wasn't
so tragic
that nowhere
was close to somewhere.

by William Stappenbeck

Threat of Rain

by Sheila Shortslef

"Mom!" Carrie yelled as she skipped into the kitchen. The mother made an inaudible, hmm, as she lit the burner and began to stir the contents of the small pot on the stove. The child tugged gently at the mother's tight pants.

"I'm bored," Carrie said desperately. "When are we gonna eat?"

"Why don't you play in the other room? Mommy's cooking," the mother said flatly, pointing a large wooden spoon in the direction of the living room. Still, the child persisted.

"But there's nothing to do in there," Carrie said with a borderline whine. "Dad won't play with me."

With her expression changing from tedium to annoyance, the mother finally looked at the child, "Damn it Carrie! Don't you listen? I *said* get in there and stop botherin' me!"

Carrie walked away slowly, deliberately dragging her feet against the bald green carpet and sat down with a thud too close to the television. Just as the game started the mother peeked her head around the corner, "George, I thought you set the table." Her impatience hung in the air like thick smog.

George muttered evil words and lifted himself belly first from the couch with a guttural grunt. He swallowed the last sip from his can of Piels and dragged into the kitchen in the same sulking manner in which Carrie exited earlier. "Where are the napkins at?" he asked his wife after looking briefly in the silverware drawer.

The mother was stirring the substance in the small pot as though she were trying to kill a bug swimming around within. Finally, she said "Do I have to take ya by the hand to set the stinkin' table?" The napkins ain't kept in the silverware drawer. What the hell is. . ." she stopped. Her mouth dropped open as she stared in disbelief at an object on the floor. George continued looking for the napkins as though nothing had happened. The mother's chest raised high with inspired air, then down again as she yelled, "Carrie, git in here!" The voice echoed through the house.

The child quickly ran into the kitchen anticipating suppertime. "Is it time to. . . eat?" she began enthusiastically until the mother's angry face came into her view.

"What is this?" the mother asked the child through clenched teeth. The big wooden spoon pointed to the floor. Carrie stared briefly at the blue vein pulsating in the mother's angry forehead.

Carrie whispered, "Mister Potato Head."

"What?" The mother moved in closer to the little girl.

"It's Mister Potato Head," Carrie repeated. She flinched like a dog who had been hit so many times in the face with a newspaper. The child began, "I'll put in the toy. . ."

Carrie reached for the toy but the mother quickly swooped down at it like a hawk for a mouse. "No!" she said. "Bad girls don't deserve toys. I told you toys don't belong in the kitchen. Bad girls don't listen, do they?"

The small pot began to boil its contents onto the stove. George snickered and began wiping up the hot white mess. The mother walked over to the tall black garbage pail, never

taking her eyes off Carrie. She deliberately raised the toy above her head and dropped it into the trash as if in slow motion.

"The table is set," the husband's monotone voice said. "Let's get a move on."

Carrie tried not cry. "Mister Potato Head," she said miserably, sucking in large gulps of air. Something snapped in the mother and she lunged at the child forcing the little arms down at her sides. The mother's face was big and red and inches from Carrie's.

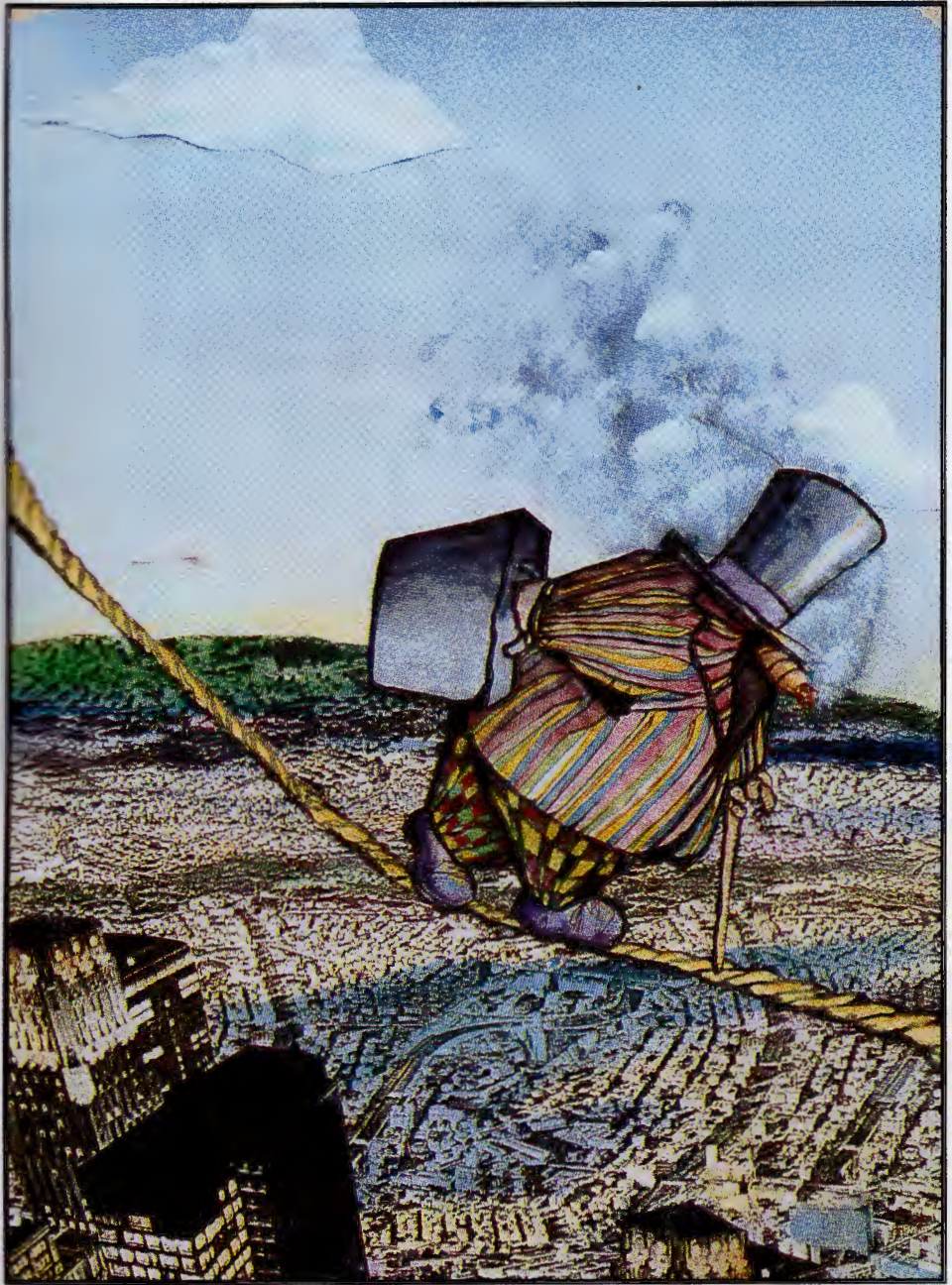
"Why are you always bad, Carrie?" the mother said, changing her facial expression with each word. She shook the child until Carrie cried, "Mommy, I'm sorry. I'm sorry." The mother released her arms and looked at the child's teary face for the first time. The child looked away and ran from the kitchen.

The lid popped open on George's can of Piels as he fixed two plates and sat down at the table. "It looks like rain again," he said without expression, looking out the window. The mother sat down across from her husband and agreed, "Yup, it sure seems that way."

Winner of the 1990 Cabbages and Kings Fiction Contest

*John Mack
Criminal Justice '91
Tel. xxx-xxxx
Senior Citizen,
Honor student,
Poet, philosopher,
Raconteur.
Hey!
And:*

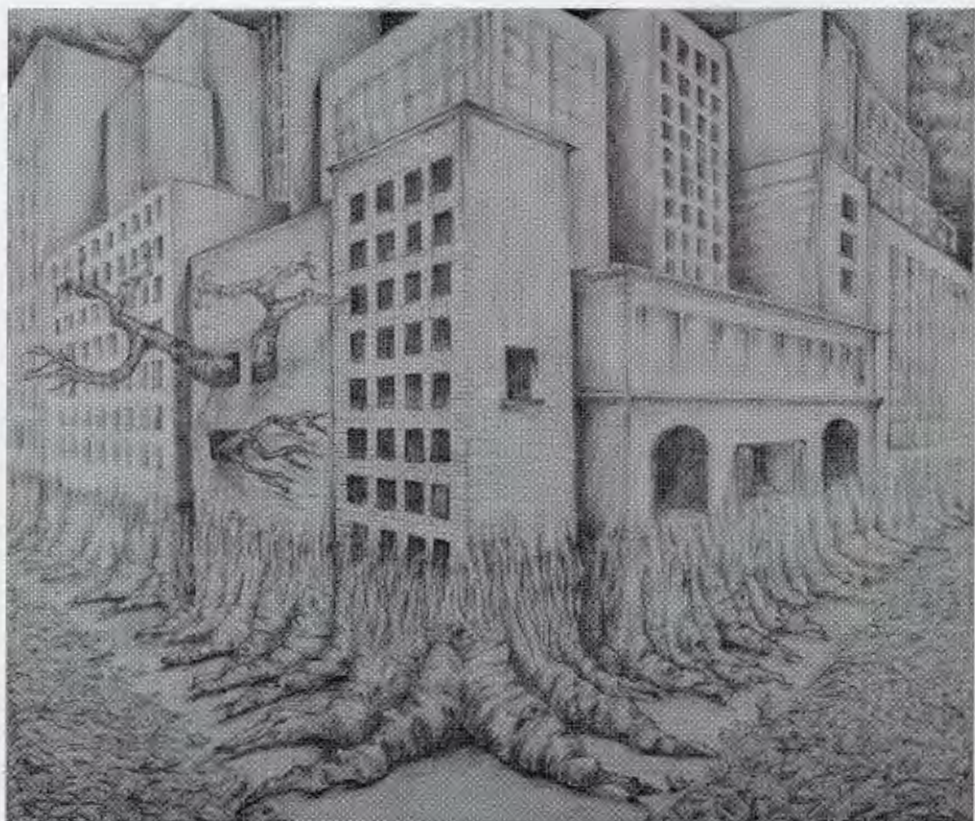
*If I don't win
that fifty bucks,
place my poem
back in my cup.*



"By the Grace of God"
by Rick Nickel

*Color Separations produced on a Scanitek 100,
Compliments of the A.B. Dick Itek Corp.*

Cappages and Kings



COSMOS

A grain of sand explodes:
effortless as thought
a universe forms.